



Bengal District Gazetteers

Faridpur

by

L. S. S. O'MALLEY, C.I.E.

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PREFACE.

I desire to acknowledge my great obligations to *The Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the Faridpur District, 1904 to 1914* by the late-Mr. J. C. Jack, I.C.S., and also to *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, by the same author.

L. S. S. O'MALLEY.

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Gazetteer of the Faridpur District

CHAPTER I.

PHYSICAL ASPECTS.

THE district of Faridpur, which lies in the west of the Dacca Division, has an area, according to the latest figures, of 2,371 square miles and contains a population of 2,249,858 persons according to the census of 1921. In size it is below the average of Bengal districts (2,846 square miles), but the number of its inhabitants is over half a million more than the general district average. In fact, only six districts in Bengal, viz., Mymensingh, Dacca, Tippera, Midnapore, 24-Parganas and Bākarganj are more populous. The headquarters of the district is Faridpur, a town on the bank of the river Mara Padma.

GENERAL
DESCRIP-
TION.

The district is bounded on the north and east by the river Padma, as the main stream of the Ganges is called in the lower portion of its course; this great river separates it from the districts of Pābna and Dacca. At its south-eastern extremity the broad channel of the Meghna, an estuary containing the united streams of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, divides the district from Tippera. On the south lies the district of Bākarganj, the boundary being formed by a number of rivers and streams and a line through marshy country. On the west are the districts of Khulna and Jessore, from which Faridpur is separated by the river Garai, its continuation the Madhumati and its branch the Bārāsia; and on the north-western extremity lies the district of Nadia.

Bound-
aries.

In the case of rivers the main stream is taken as the boundary, and as the main streams of deltaic rivers, such as bound Faridpur, frequently change their courses, the area of

the district varies from time to time. The figure given above excludes the area of the rivers forming boundaries of the district.

Configura-
tion.

In shape the district resembles an irregular triangle with its apex to the north and its base to the south. Its average breadth is about 25 miles in the north and centre and about 50 miles in the south. Just as Egypt has been called the gift of the Nile, so Farīdpur may be styled the gift of the Ganges and its distributaries. It is essentially a fluvial creation, composed entirely of alluvium and exhibiting the various processes of land formation in the delta. Bounded and intersected by rivers, it is subject to the vicissitudes of alluvion and diluvion, as well as to the periodic inundation of the land and annual fertilization of silt deposited by floods, during the rainy season, which are characteristic of Eastern Bengal.

Naturally Farīdpur falls into three distinct divisions, in which different stages of deltaic land formation may be observed. In the north, the land has been raised by the deposit of river silt and is comparatively high and dry, except during the rainy season. The north-western extremity, in the Goālund subdivision, resembles in many respects the adjoining portions of the districts of Nadia and Jessore rather than Eastern Bengal. In the south-east there is a tract of new alluvium with a network of channels which the Ganges has left in its passage eastwards. Streams and water-courses so abound here that it is difficult to go in any direction without finding one within a few miles. The Madārīpur subdivision in this part of the district, and also the adjoining part of the Sadar or headquarters subdivision, is a fertile tract partaking of the character of the north of the Bākarganj district and the south-east of the Dacca district. In the south-east, lying in the Gopālganj subdivision, the level sinks and the country consists of a chain of marshes (*bils*) with strips of high land formed of silt deposited by the rivers which have from time to time flowed or still flow through this tract. This low-lying area is mostly under water for three-fourths of the year; boats are the usual means of transit and the inhabitants may be said to be almost amphibious.

The following description of the three divisions is quoted from *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, by Mr. J. C. Jack, I.C.S. published by the Oxford University Press in 1916.

“ In the south-east the land is still below flood-level and broad rivers and countless streams are still building up their banks; in the south-west the rivers are flanked by wide strips of land which has emerged, but marsh is still predominant; in the north the land is generally above flood-level, broad rivers have given place to narrow streams, which are usually dry, hollows are already small and are slowly disappearing. NATURAL DIVISIONS.

“ The dry north of Farīdpur measures more than a thousand square miles, and to the eye it is an infinite series of flat sandy plains, broken by a large number of old water-courses, which are full of water only at the height of the flood season and at other times show dry beds, which are merely a few feet below the surface of the banks. In the plains enclosed by these old water-courses there is usually in the centre a depression, which still holds water for six or eight months of the year, but in the remaining months is capable of bearing a luxuriant crop. The country has been inhabited for several centuries and the villages are old. The population clusters along the banks of the old water-courses, which are always fringed by a thick belt of fruit and other trees. Scattered houses are rare; on the other hand there is always some orchard or garden between the houses fringing the banks of the streams. Away from the streams villages are found chiefly in the centre of the depressions, where houses have been built only after mounds have been raised to place them above flood-level. In such marches a village appears as a cluster of houses raised ten or fifteen feet upon little hillocks and in the dry months looks from a distance not unlike a row of ninepins. The north.

“ The south-east is much more interesting. It is still in process of formation and is full of rivers, which are broad and deep, heavy in the flood season with constructive silt, yet sufficiently active to work their will upon a land of plastic mud. Here, as is the fashion of the delta, the rivers are washing away mud from one bank and re-forming it on the other with a method so complete and comprehensive, that in the entire tract, perhaps 900 square miles in extent, very little of the present land has been in existence a hundred years and not very much for fifty years. Probably there has been land and population in all this country for five centuries and more; but so long as the general level of the land remains lower than the pitch of an ordinary flood, the rivers in the fury of the flood season will continue to eat away banks, which are made of nothing firmer than mud, to sweep away the old country through which their currents carry them and to raise The south-east.

fresh flats of mud to take its place a few years later. It is a well-known law that the course of a river is not a straight line, but a series of oscillations, which must always shift if not confined between banks of rock. Here the banks are of mud, so that the rivers can swing about at will; but although at any one spot there may be land to-day, a river next year and new land a few years later, yet in the total the land is always slowly increasing at the expense of the rivers and the level of the whole tract is always slowly rising. The soil in this portion of the district is very fertile and the population very dense; but the homesteads are new and orchards of well-grown trees are rarely to be seen. Homesteads are always built upon land which is raised three or four feet, the earth being obtained by cutting a tank or digging a pond beside the site.

The south-
west.

“ In the south-western part of the district the whole land is a vast marsh, yet able to sustain a large and growing population. In the normal course this land would have been raised many centuries ago by silt from the great rivers, but owing to an abrupt and unexplained change in their courses, those rivers abandoned it and went farther eastward, leaving a few smaller distributaries to fill up the vast basin. It is only within the last century that the population has flocked to this basin, but to such purpose that the dismal swamp now contains 800 people to the square mile. For eight months of the year the country is a lake, 700 square miles in extent, whose surface is broken only by the village clumps and by the two narrow strips of land which mark the course of winding streams; in the other four months large parts dry up and enable crops to be grown upon them, but the centre, away from the rivers, is still marsh and unfit for cultivation. In all this portion of the district the villages are small and cluster round a tank or large pond. When the village was founded, the tank was dug first and the earth heaped up until the banks were raised above the level of the marsh. Houses were then built on the top of the banks. In the dry season of the year, when the water in the marsh is very low or sinks into mud, these villages stand up in a rough circle, like the crater of a volcano, and can be seen for a long distance; at the height of the floods they appear to be islands floating on the surface of the lake.”

SCENERY.

The description of the district given by Sir William Hunter in his *Statistical Account of Bengal* (1875) characterizes the general aspect of the country as “ flat, tame and uninteresting ”. The general impression given by the

greater part of the district is that of a succession of level plains, some small and some large, green in their season with crops and surrounded by lines of trees. These lines alone break the horizon, and there is a certain monotony of scenery, though the luxuriant crops and the green verdure of the vegetation are a relief to the eye after the arid sun-baked plains of other parts of India. The lines of trees mark the banks of rivers and streams, along which the population clusters. Villages, which consist of detached homesteads imbedded in trees and vegetation, are found on the highest land on the borders of marshes or on the banks of water-courses. Along many of the larger rivers the line of villages is often unbroken for miles together, so much so that the end of one village cannot be distinguished from the beginning of another. In the *bil* area to the south-west one swamp is often connected with another by narrow *khāls*, i.e., natural water-courses or artificial channels excavated for purposes of drainage, and these too are lined with homesteads. In this area, when the land is flooded, as is the case for eight months of the year, nothing can be seen but a dreary stretch of water with reeds and other aquatic vegetation appearing on the surface in the deeper parts with the usual line of trees on the horizon showing human habitations.

The scenery along the Padma and Meghna is unique in character and presents a striking picture of river life, which has been picturesquely described by Mr. Lovat Fraser in *India under Curzon and After*. Travelling up the mighty streams of Eastern Bengal, he says, "One is voyaging in the midst of an entirely new India, an India almost beyond the imagination. The huge rivers, in places two miles wide even in the dry season, have nothing in common with the bare brown plains of the Deccan, the placid luxuriance of Madras or the burning deserts of Rajputana. They have a charm that never fades. In the faint opalescence of early dawn, when the great square-sailed country craft drift past in dim and ghastly silence, they recall memories of unforgettable hours upon the Nile. The vessel seems to be steaming through the morning mists on some illimitable lake. Even in the full glare of noontide the abiding beauty of the scene remains undiminished. The steamer traverses a flat green land and swings past village after village screened by dense foliage. The shallow side creeks are full of quaint craft. The little shore boats dancing swiftly across the glittering waters are like sampans; the vessels floating slowly down the broad bosom of the stream are like a fleet of junks. Immense unwieldy flats, laden with jute, glide slowly by. In winter

there is a keen, fresh, wholesome breeze; and even to those who think they know India, the journey is so picturesque and unfamiliar, that it is like a voyage into the unknown."

**RIVER
SYSTEM.**

Farīdpur is bounded on two sides by great rivers. The Padma or Ganges, which near Goālundu is joined by the Jamuna or Brahmaputra, flows along the whole length of the district, from north-west to south-east, where it merges in the Meghna, as the estuary is called by which the water of the two greatest rivers of India discharge themselves into the sea. The Madhumati, one of the principal distributaries of the Ganges, which is known as the Garai in the upper part of its course, bounds the district from north-west to south-west. The chief river in the interior is the Ariāl Khan, which represents a channel down which the water of the Ganges formerly flowed. There are many minor ramifications, the principal of which are the Chandna, Bhubaneswar, Mara or "dead" Padma (also called the Pālāng) and Naya Bhāngni or "new cut." The name of streams is legion. There is a network of small waterways, such as the Kumār, Sitālakhya, another Mara Padma and the Jakhla, all four of which fall ultimately into the Ariāl Khan. Last, may be mentioned the Saldaha or Ghāgar river, which falls into the Madhumati after draining the marshes in the south, known as the Nasībshāhi, Atādānga and Kājalia Bils.

For a full appreciation of the nature of the rivers and their relation to the geography and agriculture of the district a brief explanation of the deltaic river system is desirable. When a river reaches the almost level delta, its current is checked. Owing to the very slight slope of the country the stream is unable to carry away its burden of silt, which is accordingly deposited in its bed and on its banks. By degrees, therefore, the latter are raised, so that in course of time the river flows at a higher level than the surrounding country. Another feature of the deltaic system is that the main rivers no longer receive tributaries, but spread out in distributaries, which help to carry off their volume of water. They, too, have their beds and banks raised in the same way. Between the different rivers there is a series of depressions, into which their water spills when they come down in flood during the rainy season. As the river falls, the flood water makes its way back to it through the various creeks and channels, leaving behind a deposit of silt which fertilizes the land and raises its level. A river will go on raising its bed, as well as the adjoining country, till one or other of two things happens. It either changes its direction,

cutting out a new course through the soft friable soil or it dies, either because it is choked by its own sediment or because shoals form at its intake from a parent river and cut off the ingress of water.

Another factor of great importance in the hydrography of the rivers has been the shifting of the course of the Ganges. The main stream of the Ganges formerly flowed down the Bhāgirathi to the sea, but as this channel silted up, the Ganges left it, apparently in the sixteenth century, and began to find an outlet by other channels further east, including the Garai in this district. Each in turn became the main stream, the Ganges continuing its march to the east and leaving the offtakes to the west to dwindle and die. Finally, it broke more directly east across its old channels and found a course down the Padma, which was nearly the same as at present, except that it turned south below Goāundo, passed close to Faridpur and flowed past Madāripur by what is now the Ariāl Khān.

The Brahmaputra, on the other hand, formerly flowed further to the east, through the Mymensingh district, and joined the Meghna near Bhanabbazar. After 1787, as a result of a change of the course of the river Tista, which, instead of being a tributary of the Ganges, found its way into the Brahmaputra, that river was diverted to the west and, following the channel of the Jamuna, joined the Ganges near Goāundo, and the united stream fell into the Meghna, near Chāndpur, at a point 45 miles north of the former junction. The accession of the Brahmaputra stopped the Ganges from finding a new channel further to the east. Indeed a reflex tendency set in between 1810 and 1830, for the Brahmaputra threatened to push the Ganges back to its old distributaries to the west. The result was the enlargement of the river Garai, but, with this exception, the Ganges maintained its course along the Padma, and the rivers taking off it on the south continued to deteriorate.

As a result of the movements sketched above, we find dead or dying rivers in the north of the district. Some are but the remnants of rivers and pass down very little of the Ganges flood water, except at the height of the rains. Their beds have become shallow, the water is confined within high banks over which they no longer spill, and in the cold weather they are reduced to chains of stagnant pools. Their land-building powers have almost ceased and the soil has decreased in fertility. The Garai and Madhumati, on the other hand, are still active and bring down volumes of water from the Ganges.

Shoals, however, have formed at the mouths of the distributaries which connect with the marshes, and it is only at the height of floods that the silt-laden water can come into them and carry on the process of land formation. A further consequence is that when the flood subsides in the river, the water in the marsh cannot drain into it quickly, owing to the obstruction of the shoal. Other rivers, such as the Chandna, Kumār and Barāsia, are decadent, but the two former, with the Madhumati, are gradually and slowly filling up marshes to the south-west. On the east the floods of the Biahmaputia and Ganges annually spread over the land and cover it with a rich alluvial deposit.

The growth of the water-hyacinth is said to have increased to an alarming extent in the *bils* and *khāls* of the district. The river Kumār, which is the main waterway connecting the Sadar subdivision with the Mādāripur and Gopālganj subdivisions, is sometimes almost blocked up by this weed, in spite of efforts to clear it.

Alluvion
and
diluvion.

Since the time of the Permanent Settlement almost all the rivers have changed their courses to such an extent as to leave dry the beds in which they then flowed. Alluvion and diluvion still proceed, especially in and along the Padma and Meghna, the channels of which swing from side to side of their sandy beds. The surface of the country in their neighbourhood is thus subject to constant change. Land in their beds and along their banks is perpetually being cut away and re-formed as the rivers shift their channels, now eroding the land and now building it up. At one place the river cuts into its bank and washes away village sites; at another the shore receives a new deposit of alluvium. Similarly in the river beds themselves islands, called *chars* or *diāras*, are thrown up and washed away as the river cuts out new channels for itself. These lands are the subject of perennial disputes, recurring riots and protracted litigation, which is of a complex character, owing to the difficulty of knowing whether the land is an accretion or a re-formation *in situ* and to the absence of fixed landmarks, as the rivers every year carry on a continual process of destruction and renewal.

Chars or
diāras.

The creation of *chars* or *diāras* is an interesting example of soil formation. Some back-water or curve of the river bed sets up an eddy in the current, which thereupon becomes sufficiently stationary to deposit the sand which it holds in solution. The level of the *char* gradually rises as the water lying stagnant over it spreads a layer of silt over the sand, and this deposit of silt deepens at every high flood until the

char rises above flood level. The soil is extremely fertile and grows rich crops; but if the growth of the *char* is arrested by the river shifting its course, so that the flood water does not cover it during the second stage of its formation, it remains sandy and barren. The sequel to the emergence of a fertile *char* is well described by Mr. J. C. Jack in his *Farīdpur Settlement Report* (1916): "The rivers fall rapidly and rise as rapidly. The new land is often very extensive and the locality of its formation can never from year to year be anticipated. As soon as the river has receded, the land is ripe for cultivation, and if any delay occurs in transplanting into the liquid mud which the river has left, there is great danger that the river will rise again too soon for the crop to be harvested. Even if the whole of the river bed belonged to a single landlord and there were no disputes about title, there would still be disputes between the cultivators of villages contiguous to the new formations and between the cultivators of a single village. The crops which these lands supply are too valuable for everybody not to desire a chance of reaping them; they require no effort, the land needs no ploughing, the crops need no weeding; it is only necessary to transplant when the river has gone and to harvest when the river returns. It is only human nature to make every effort to reap so easy a profit and the history of these *chars* is such that effort will invariably take the direction of turbulence and rioting." It was largely in consequence of lawlessness in connexion with the *chars* of this and the Dacca district that the Bengal Alluvial Lands Act was passed in 1920, with the object of preventing the turbulence and rioting which hitherto had so frequently accompanied the formation of alluvial land.

The largest compact groups of *char* land are the Panchāz Hāzāri group in the north-east of the Goālando thana, the Bandākhola group in the north-east of the Sibchar thana, the Kālkini group in the south-east of the Mādāripur thana and the Kodālpur group in the east of the Pālang thana.

The Padma is a broad waterway split up into several channels which flow between shifting banks and islands. Navigable at all seasons of the year, it is one of the most frequented waterways in the world. The downward traffic is briskest in the rains, when the river is in flood; the current is then so strong that even steamers sometimes find it difficult to make headway against it. During the rest of the

Padma.

year boats make their way back up stream, sometimes without cargoes, either helped by a favourable wind or laboriously towed from the bank. The Padma begins to rise in July, when the Brahmaputra, which, as already stated, joins it near Goālundo, comes down in flood. This is usually spent before the flood water of the Ganges comes down. During August and September silt from the combined streams of both rivers is spread all over the east of the district, while a good deal of the water comes over the land at Farīdpur and further south. The Padma discharges into the Meghna by a channel about 2 miles wide, which is known as the Kirtināsa or destroyer of antiquities, owing to the ravages which it has wrought among the palaces, temples and monuments at Rājūnagar, one of the old capitals of Eastern Bengal.

Mara
Padma.

There is a local tradition that formerly the Padma took a southerly direction at Salimpur, about 25 miles north of the town of Farīdpur, and after passing Kanhāipur flowed towards the east and discharged itself below the town of Farīdpur into the Padma, which was then but a narrow stream. This old channel has silted up and is known as the Mara or dead Padma.

Garai and
Madhu-
mati.

The Garai leaves the Ganges not far from Kushtia in the Nadia district and flowing south assumes the name of the Madhumati. It nowhere enters the district, but forms its western boundary and passes into the Bākarganj district at Gopālganj, from which point it takes the name of Baleswar. It still forms one of the principal channels by which the waters of the Ganges are carried to the sea, especially during the monsoon, when the comparatively high level of the Brahmaputra interferes with a full discharge by more eastern channels. Reference has already been made to the fact that in the first half of the nineteenth century there seemed a likelihood of the Garai carrying off the main stream of the Ganges and that the Garai was consequently enlarged. Some time later it was anticipated that the river would open out still further. In 1857 Captain Sherwill remarked: "The Garai is becoming broader every year, its fierce current is rapidly cutting away its banks, and in a few years it will likely absorb the greater portion, if not all, of the water from the Podda;" and in 1863 Mr. Fergusson, who made a special study of the changes in the delta of the Ganges, was of opinion that there was a good chance of the Ganges being diverted down the Mātābhānga, Garai, and the Chandna on the east.

The Bārāsia is a branch of the Madhumati, which leaves the parent river at Goālbāri, flows to the south and, after a course of about 20 miles, again falls into the Madhumati. Bārāsia.

The Ariāl Khān, which is known as the Bhubaneswar in its upper reaches, leaves the Padma a few miles from the town of Farīdpur and first flows in a south-easterly and then in a southerly direction. When it reaches the south of the district, it divides into two large streams, the western of which is called the Tarki. It leaves the district and passes into Bākarganj near Mādāripur. As already stated, this is an old channel for the Ganges water and it is still its principal distributary in the interior of the district. Ariāl Khān and Bhubaneswar.

The Chandna branches off from the Padma in the extreme north-east of the district and flows in a tortuous course along the western boundary, generally from north to south, till it falls into the Garai. This river has silted up and is almost dry in many parts of its course, except during the rainy season. Chandna.

The Kumār branches off from the Chandna near Kanhūipur, a few miles from the town of Farīdpur, and, after a tortuous course, generally from north-west to south-east, joins the Ariāl Khān at Mādāripur and flows into the district of Bākarganj. Kumār.

The district consists entirely of recent alluvium, which is composed of sandy clay and sand along the course of the rivers and of fine silt consolidating into clay in other parts, while beds of impure peat commonly occur in the marshes. The silt which the Ganges deposits annually has a large proportion of silica, mica and argillaceous earth and has not the same fertilizing qualities as the richer silt brought down by the floods of the Brahmaputra. GEOLOGY.

A geological problem is afforded by the existence of the *bil* area with its deep marshes in the south-west of the district, and two theories have been put forward to account for the fact that the Ganges in its progress eastward has failed to fill them with alluvial deposit. Mr. Fergusson, starting with the premise that a large sheet of still water is a barrier to the current of a river, conjectures that this area was a great marsh before the water of the Ganges reached it and that this marshy belt deflected the Ganges, which was forced to pass it on the north and find an outlet east. He points to the existence of another deep unfilled depression in the Swatch of No Ground, in the Bay of Bengal off the coast

of Khulna, which is roughly parallel to the marshy tract in Faridpur. Another theory is that an earthquake caused a subsidence after the Ganges had flowed into this area and raised its level. There is said to be some local tradition supporting this view, and it is pointed out that the foundations of old masonry buildings and ancient coins have been found in the marshes. In particular the discovery of Gupta coins of the fifth century A.D., together with copper-plates of the same period and a Buddhist image, in the village of Kotālipāra, tend to show that this area is not a recent formation and to support the theory of subsidence. Mr. Fergusson's theory, moreover, presupposes that there was dry land to the east of the *bil* area through which the Ganges could make its way, whereas there were marshes in what is now the Dacca district, which would have been a barrier to the passage of the Ganges; while it is to be noted that, in point of fact, three rivers, viz., the Madhumati, Chaudna and Kumār, succeed in flowing through the marshes and are gradually filling them up.*

BOTANY

Marsh plants and weeds are found in great variety and luxuriance; and in the *bil* area the surface of the marshes is covered either with huge stretches of inundated rice or with matted floating islets or sedges, grasses and various water-lilies, the most striking of which is the *makana* (*Euryale ferox*). The reeds in this area are a source of income; they are made into closely woven mats, while the reed called *hogla* is used for roofing huts. The artificial mounds on which homesteads are built, when not occupied by gardens, are covered with a dense scrub jungle containing semi-spontaneous species with a few taller trees, of which the commonest is the *jwal* (*Odina Wodier*) and the most conspicuous the red cotton tree (*Bombax malabaricum*).

The chief species of palm are the date palm (*Phoenix acaulis*) and the betel-nut (*Areca catechu*), the former found mostly in the north and the latter in the south. Date-palms are rarely grown in plantations, but usually on the embankments of the fields. From their scattered position they and the mango trees give a characteristic note to the landscape. The betel-nut is mostly found in thanas Bhushna, Mādāripur and Pālang, and is specially abundant in the thana last named. Coconut palms are found as isolated trees, except in thanas Mādāripur and Pālang, the latter of which contains almost half the number of those found in the district. It appears that both the betel-nut and coconut were

* J. C. Jack, *Faridpur Settlement Report* (1916), pp. 1, 2.

formerly far more frequent. The explanation is that their growth is favoured by an impregnation of salt in the soil and that the tides having receded, spring tides no longer impregnate the soil with salt. Clumps of bamboos are found everywhere, except in the *bil* area of Kotālipāra thana; they surround and overshadow most houses. The local bamboo is neither so strong nor so graceful nor so straight as that of Northern Bengal. Mangoes of a poor flavour abound, especially in the north of the district, and groves of plantain, mostly nutritious and palatable, are common both on the mainland and the river flats, except in Kotālipāra thana.

Rennell's map show a large part of what is now the district as "impenetrable morass," and from the records of early British rule it is clear that the east of the district contained extensive stretches of jungle, which were the habitat of tigers and buffaloes. In 1792 rewards were paid for killing ten tigers in Mādāripur; and even as late as 1875 the *Statistical Account of Bengal* stated that wild buffaloes were common in the cold season. Leopards of the small variety, usually found in Bengal still lurk in the patches of jungle found in the north and west of the district and occasionally a tiger breaks cover from the Sundaibans and takes refuge in the southern marshes. Wild pigs are numerous and devastate the crops, especially in the Farīdpur and Bhushna thanas. They are no new visitation. Fifty years ago it was reported that they were found in such swarms, that unless prompt measures were taken for their destruction, many villages would relapse into jungle; in some the outlying lands had already gone out of cultivation owing to their ravages. The marshes abound with wild fowl, geese, ducks of various sorts, snipe, curlew, teal, etc. Crocodiles, both of the man-eating and fish-eating varieties, are common in the large rivers. FAUNA.

With its large water area the district is well stocked with fish, which forms a large part of the food of the people; for part of the year, when fish is specially abundant, the poorer classes almost live on it. Fish.

The only sea fish which visits the district is the *bhekti*, known locally as the *korāil*, a fish in great demand among Europeans. Another favourite fish among Europeans is that succulent member of the herring family, the *hilsa*, which teems in the Padma and is an important article of export to Calcutta. Some of the most popular fish are members of the carp family, viz., *ruī* (*Labeo rohita*), *kālbans* (*Labeo*

calbani), and *katla* (*Catla buehanani*). Another fish of the same family is the *mirgal* (*Cirrhina mrigala*), which is found in the muddy bottoms of rivers and tanks and is of an inferior flavour. Various scaleless fish, known as silurids, are common and constitute a considerable part of the dietary of the poorer classes. One of these is the *boāl*, a voracious fish which preys on small fry and has therefore to be excluded rigorously from tanks in which fish are stocked. Its flesh is coarse and tasteless, and a more palatable fish is the flat fish called *pābda*, which is considered a wholesome table fish. Another silurid found in the still water of marshes and tanks is the *māgur* (*Clarus magur*), which is regarded as having a delicate taste and is much sought after. A fish very like it in appearance is the *singi*, a name meaning the horned fish, which is given to it from the sting which it gives if incautiously handled.

A curiosity among fish is the climbing perch called *kai* (*Annabas scandens*), which has spines by which it can manage to pull itself up. It is mostly found in stagnant water and is much esteemed for its flavour; it is commonly given to convalescent patients.

Among crustacea the *galda chingri* or cray fish abounds in the rivers, and large quantities are caught in flooded fields at the end of the rains. The ordinary *chingri* or shrimp is also abundant. Quantities of mussels and snails are collected in the marshes, from the shells of which lime is made; they are laid out on the banks of the streams till decomposition sets in and the shell readily comes away.

CLIMATE

As in other parts of Eastern Bengal, the climate may be described as mild, equable and humid. It is not characterized by extremes of heat and cold, and the variation of temperature is comparatively small. The range between maximum and minimum temperatures rises to 22 degrees for two months of the year, is 17 degrees for five months and falls to ten degrees for the other five months. Mean temperature remains at 83° from April to September and falls to 66° during the cold weather, the mean minimum being lowest in January, when it is 53°. At the same time humidity is great, owing to the large amount of moisture in the air, and many people consequently find the climate relaxing. The air is rarely dry, except in the cold weather; even in March the frequent occurrence of storms produces humidity in the atmosphere. In the rains, when a moisture-laden wind blows from the east or south-east, it is exceedingly damp, but the

steadiness and strength of the wind are an alleviation of the damp heat.

The average annual rainfall of the district is 73 inches; the heaviest precipitation takes place at Pālang (94 inches) and the lightest at Rājbari (Goālundo) viz., 64 inches. Rainfall is very light from November to February and increases from March to May, which are the season of local disturbances. During the monsoon months, June to September, the monthly rainfall is uniform, being 13 to 14½ inches a month, except in September, when it falls to 9 inches. In May and October, the months which immediately precede and follow the monsoon, the rainfall is nine and six inches, respectively, and is due to the incursion of cyclonic storms, when heavy rain may fall for days together. During these two months the Padma and Meghna are subject to sudden and violent storms, which are dangerous to small craft plying on their waters. The rain-registering stations are Bāliākāndi, Bhānga, Bhushna, Farīdpur, Haridāspur, Mādāripur, Pālang, Pāngsa, Rājbari (Goālundo) and Takerhāt.

CHAPTER II.

HISTORY

EARLY PERIOD.

The information so far available about the early history of Farīdpuṛ is fragmentary, but there can be little doubt that it formed part of Vanga or Banga, the ancient name of the deltaic country south of the Padma, which lay between the Bhāgīrāthī and the old course of the Brahmaputra and included the southern portion of Eastern Bengal.¹ Vanga is described in the *Raghuvansa* as consisting of islands amid the streams of the Ganges; its inhabitants were said to use boats for all the business of life, including war, and to be expert in nautical matters. The *Raghuvansa* may be ascribed to the fifth century A.D., at which time the sea extended further north than it now does and the tides penetrated further inland. The country near the sea consisted of a network of islands and interlacing rivers, but in the intervening fifteen centuries the delta has pushed southward and the sea has receded as land has been formed by the alluvial deposit brought down by the Brahmaputra, Ganges and other rivers.

Gupta empire.

Kālīdāsa, the author of the *Raghuvansa*, is believed to have flourished in the early part of the fifth century A.D., probably during the reign of Chandragupta II, the son of Samudragupta, who is known to have extended his empire to the Gangetic delta and to have exercised suzerainty over the frontier kingdoms on the east. Gold coins of Chandragupta II and of Skandagupta, both of whom bore the title of Vikramaditya and of whom the latter ruled over the Gupta empire in the second half of the fifth century, have been found in a field called Sonākānduri in the village of Guākhola, about three-quarters of a mile west of the south-west corner of the fort of Kotālipāra. This was a great fort with mud walls, still 15 to 30 feet high, enclosing an area of about four square miles, which must have been one of the wonders of India when it was constructed.

Welcome light has been recently thrown on the administration of the Gupta empire by the decipherment by Babu

Rādha Govinda Bāsak of five copper-plate inscriptions found at Dāmōdarpur in the Dinājpur district.* They record transfers of land during the reigns of Kumāragupta I, who ruled in the first part of the fifth century, and of Budhagupta and Bhānugupta, who may be ascribed to the second half of the fifth and the first half of the sixth century respectively. It appears that Paundravardhana, i.e., North Bengal, was under Viceroys or Governors, who were appointed by the Emperor and themselves had the power of appointing officers in charge of districts or divisions. These officers were assisted by an Advisory Board of four members representing different interests, three being drawn from the wealthy, mercantile and artisan classes. Record-keepers dealt with titles to land, and they reported to Government when a transfer was applied for. Village elders were consulted before transfers were allowed; and there was a fixed rate at which land was sold.

Copper-plate inscriptions of a later date, which have been found in Farīdpuṛ and deciphered by Mr. F. E. Pargiter, reveal the existence of another dynasty in this part of the delta during the latter half of the sixth century A.D.† Two refer to the grant of land during the reign of a king named Dharmaditya and the third to a similar grant during the reign of Gopāchandra; there is no record of the provenance of these three plates, which are simply called the Farīdpuṛ copper-plates. Their dates are taken by Mr. Pargiter to be 531, 567 approximately and 586 A.D. Dr. Hoernle identifies Dharmaditya with the emperor Yasodharman, who was revered as a just and virtuous ruler and may therefore have been known as Dharmaditya. He is inclined to identify Gopāchandra with Gopichandra, who, it is suggested, was a son of the Gupta emperor whom Yasodharman displaced, and it is conjectured that though he only ruled over this eastern province, he asserted his right to the title held by his ancestors.

Copper-plate inscriptions.

A fourth copper-plate grant has been found at Ghāgrāhātī, a village close to Pinjāri on the river Ghāgar, which flows along the western rampart of the Kotālīpāra fort.‡ This

* Rādha Govinda Bāsak, *The Five Damodarpur Copper-plate Inscriptions of the Gupta Period*, Epigraphia Indica, Vol. XV, No. 7, p. 113 et seq.

† F. E. Pargiter, *Three Copper-plate Grants from East Bengal*, Indian Antiquary, 1910, p. 193 et seq.

‡ F. E. Pargiter, *The Ghagrahati (Kotwālipāra) Grant and Three other Copper-plate Grants*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1911, p. 475 et seq.

copper-plate refers to a monarch named Sāmāchāra Deva, and Mr. Pargiter assigns it to a date between 615 and 620 A. D. He is of opinion that Sāmāchāra Deva was one of the independent kings who ruled in Bengal after the Gupta empire broke up and before Harsha established his supremacy over it. The authenticity of all four grants has been challenged by Mr. R. D. Banarji, who denounces them as ancient forgeries;* but Mr. Pargiter appears to have the better of the argument about their genuineness, and his view has been confirmed by the discovery of the Dāmodarpur copper-plate grants, which record similar transfers of land and have other points of resemblance. Babu Rādhā Govinda Bāsak states that from the reading of the texts of these grants it is obvious that Mr. Banarji's view is quite untenable and that we shall have to follow Mr. Pargiter in saying that the four Faridpur plates are quite genuine. Further confirmation of Mr. Pargiter has also been afforded by the discovery of two gold coins of Sāmāchāra (with coins of Gupta emperors and of Sāsanka, king of Bengal) on the bank of the river Arun-khāli near Muhammadpur in the Jessore district, 30 miles north-west of Ghāgrāhāti. These coins have been deciphered by Baub Nalini Kanta Bhattachali,† who comes to the conclusion that Sāmāchāra was a king, not of the Gupta lineage, and a devout Saiva, who must have ruled before Sasānka, whose immediate successors in Eastern India were Aditya Sena and his descendants in the west and the Khudgas in the east. It is, he says, "almost certain that Sāmāchāra was a predecessor of Sasānka in the kingdom of Gaur and of the same lineage, possibly his father."

The copper-plates refer to the province of Vāraka, which is identified with the country between the main stream of the Ganges on the west and the Brahmaputra on the east, bounded by the sea on the south and probably by the Barind of North Bengal on the north, in other words Vanga, or, as it was called later, Samatata. This province was governed by a local ruler called Mahārāja Sthānudatta and later by a minister. It was divided into districts with an organization of district officers and boards of officials; it is interesting to find that the head of one of these boards was a Kayasth. Subordinate officials consisted of an agent or deputy of the

* *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1911 and 1914.

† N. K. Bhattachali, *Notes on the Gupta and Later Gupta Coinage*, Numismatic Supplement to the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1923, pp. 54-57.

district officer and another officer who was concerned with the trade of the district and probably also with customs duties.

There were village authorities called *mahattaras*, the leading men of the village, whose consent was required to the alienation of land, a record-keeper, who kept registers showing titles to land and was referred to when transfers of land were proposed, and a measurer of land. Mr. Pargiter believes that the Eastern Bengal name for a village headman, *matabar*, which is commonly derived from an Arabic word meaning trustworthy, is probably derived from *mahattara-vara*, i.e., chief of the leading men of the village. Instances of joint family ownership and communal village ownership of land are found as well as of individual private ownership. The alienation of land and the introduction of a new owner required the consent of the village, expressed through the *mahattaras*. Private owner did not sell their land direct to the purchaser. The latter applied to the leading men, who arranged and effected the transfer, a price being paid at the prevailing rate, which was apparently fixed for the whole country bordering on the sea. Probably the *mahattaras* acted on behalf of the Government in order to safeguard the royal revenues, as land might be revenue-paying or granted free of revenue.

The Ghāgrāhāti plate records the grant of land to a Brahman by the business men or merchants of the place, to whom he was to give his priestly ministrations. Mr. Pargiter points out that we have here an instance of the way in which Brahmans moved onwards and settled as priests in new places which had reached a position to need their services; the Dāmodarpur copper-plates already mentioned also bear witness to the fact that in the fifth and sixth centuries A. D. there was no lack of Brahmans in Bengal. Four modern caste names are found, viz., Kunda (the modern Kundu), Pālīt, Ghosh and Datta, and in one of the other plates a harbour for building ships (or boats), i.e., a dock-yard, is mentioned.

Babu N. K. Bhattasali, Curator of the Dacca Museum, has also identified Silakunda and Silakunda *grāma*, which are mentioned in two of the plates, with the river Sildaha or Saldaha, as the Ghāgar is called in the lower part of its course, and with the village of Sildaha, which is situated on that river some miles south of Kotālipāra within the boundary of the Bākarganj district. The Ghāgrāhāti plate

is now in the Dacca Museum, to which it was presented by its owner, and, after careful study of it, Babu N. K. Bhattasali has arrived at a reading of the boundaries of the land of which it records the grant, which has enabled him to identify that land with a site close to the north-east corner of the fort at Kotālipāra; the fort, according to his reading, is called the fort of Chandra Varman. For further particulars the reader is referred to the article on Kotālpāra in Chapter XIV.

He also points out that as Vāraka means a tract lying between and separating two rivers, the province (*mandala*) of Vāraka is "the tract represented by the modern districts of Farīdpur and Bākarganj almost identical with what was anciently known as Vanga". He puts forward an interesting theory as to the site of Navyakasika, which is referred to in the Ghāgrāhāti plate as the Governor's headquarters or provincial capital. The name he interprets as meaning the place provided with a new canal or water-course (*khāl*, cf. Noākhāli), and he surmises that the capital was at Sabhar in the Dacca district. Sabhar is a place of some antiquity, as evidenced by the discovery of gold coins of the imitation Gupta type. It contains a fort, about two miles from which is a channel or water-course bearing the name Katāganga, which points to artificial construction, and beyond this are the ruins of palaces and temples. "The name Sabhar," writes Babu N. K. Bhattasali, "a corruption of Sambhara, means fullness, wealth, affluence. A visit to the site will convince any one that it was a well-planned city of very great affluence, surrounded by an artificial water-course. The latter might have been the cause of its name Navyakasika, while its subsequent opulence and splendour earned for it the name of Sambhara."*

Hiuen
Tsiang's
account.

In the second quarter of the seventh century Bengal was incorporated in the empire of Harsha, and we have a brief contemporary account of this part of the country from the pen of the Chinese pilgrim, Hiuen Tsiang or Yuang Chwang, who travelled in different parts of India from 630 to 643, when Harsha was at the height of his power. Samatata, which corresponded to the ancient Vanga, was a low-lying country bordering on the sea, and rich in crops, flowers and fruit. The climate was soft, the manners of the people

* N. K. Bhattasali, *The Ghugrahāti Copper-plate Inscription of Samatara Deva and connected questions of later Gupta chronology*, Dacca Review, May-June 1920 and July-August 1920.

agreeable. The inhabitants were men of small stature and black complexion, but diligent in the acquisition of learning. There were about 30 Buddhist monasteries with some 3,000 priests and 30 Brahmanical temples, while the naked ascetics called *Nigranthas* were also numerous. It is interesting to observe that adherents of orthodox Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism lived side by side, apparently peaceably.

After the death of Harsha in 646 or 647 his empire fell to pieces and independent kings established themselves in Bengal. Our knowledge of the history of Eastern Bengal for some centuries after this is scanty; but a certain amount of information has been derived from inscribed copper-plates. The object of these plates was to record the grant of land, but they are also of historical value, as the preambles mention the king or chief in whose time the grant was made and recite his ancestry. Thus we know of one local dynasty, that of the Khudgas, who are mentioned in a plate found in the Dacca district at Ashrātpur. These kings were Buddhists and their capital was Karmanta, which Babu N. K. Bhattachāli identifies with Kāmṭa, 14 miles west of Comilla. In the tenth or eleventh century there was another line of local rulers, also Buddhists by religion, who bore the name of Chandra and had their capital at Bikrampur in the Dacca district. Knowledge of their existence is due to the discovery of copper-plate grants at Idilpur and Kedārpur in this district, as well as at Rāmpāl, the old capital of Bikrampur, in the Dacca district.*

We also know of a line of Hindu rulers, called Varman, who ruled at Bikrampur, viz., Vajra Varman, Jāta Varman, Sāmala Varman, Bhoja Varman and probably also Jyoti Varman and Hari Varman, the last of whom flourished in the twelfth century. The second of the house, Jāta Varman, appears to have taken advantage of the revolt of the Kaibarttas of Northern Bengal against the Pāla kings to assume independence and to have subdued Kāmṛp, which formed part of their empire. Later, according to the *Rāma-charita* of Sandhyakara, the Pāla king Rāmpāla conquered Kāmṛp and made a vassal of a Varman king of Eastern Bengal, who "sought his protection by surrendering his best elephants and coach of State." The Varman dynasty seems to have continued to rule in Eastern Bengal in a state of

semi-independence till they and their overlords, the Pāla kings, were overthrown by the Sena kings.

MUHAM-
MADAN
PERIOD.

The Senas.

The story of the Muhammadan invasion, the raid on the Sena capital at Nadia, and the flight of the aged Sena king, Lakshmana Sena, is well known. Lakshmana Sena retired to Eastern Bengal, where his descendants continued to rule as local sovereigns for some generations, holding their court at Rāmpāl or Sonārgāon. One of them, Biswārūp, is mentioned, with his descent through his father Lakshmana Sena from Ballāl Sena and Vijaya Sena, in a copper-plate grant found in the village of Madanapāla near Pinjāri, and close to the south-west corner of the Kotālipārā fort; the village of Pinjakasthi mentioned in the grant has been identified with Pinjāri †. The Senas appear to have been left undisturbed for about a century, but were not altogether independent, for they paid tribute; the *Tabakāt-i-Nāsiri* mentions the payment of tribute after the invasion of Ghiāṣ-ud-dīn Iwaz in 1223.

Early
Muham-
madan
rule

According to an account by Professor Blochmann (given in Sir William Hunter's *Statistical Account of the Dacca District*), "the Bengal territory conquered in 1203-1204 by the Muhammadans did not comprise the eastern districts, the Bangadesh proper, which remained in the possession of Ballāl Sen's descendants till the end of the thirteenth century, when Sonārgāon was occupied by the grandsons of the Emperor Balban. In 1330 Muhammad Tughlak conquered Eastern Bengal also and divided it into three provinces, Lakhnauti, Sātgaon and Sonārgaon, including Dacca. The Governor of the last province was Tatār Bahrām Khān. On his death in 1338 his armour-bearer, Fakhr-ud-dīn, seized the government and reigned for more than ten years under the title of Mubārak Shāh. After an unsuccessful attempt by his son and his son-in-law to retain possession of the eastern districts, the whole of Bengal was, in 1351, united by Shams-ud-dīn Ilyās Shāh and his son Sikandar Shāh, Sonārgāon near Dacca becoming the residence of the Governors, generally sons of the reigning king. Hence Sonārgāon and the eastern districts were the centres of frequent rebellions. Thus, Azam Shāh, Sikandar's son, proclaimed his independence in Sonārgāon, where he invited the poet Hāfiz to his

* Akshay Kumar Maity, *The Stones of Varendra*, *Modern Review*, September 1912.

† Nagendra Nath Basu, *On a Copper-plate Grant of Viswarupa, one of the Sena Kings of Bengal*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1896, pp. 6-15.

court. Under Azam Shāh's successors the throne of Bengal was usurped by Raja Kāns, and the eastern districts fell a prey to the Rajas of Tippera, Assam and Arākān. But about 1445 Bengal was again united under Mahmūd Shāh (Ik), a descendant of Ilyās Shāh, whose family reigned till 1487. During their reigns the eastern districts formed the province of Muazzamābād, which extended from the Meghna to Laur in Silhet, whilst the country about Dacca, Farīdpur and Bākarganj was called Jalālābād and Fathābād. Then followed the house of the usurper, Husain Shāh, the greatest king Bengal has had, who extended his power from the eastern districts over the whole of Bengal."

Of the local history of Farīdpur there is nothing to record till we come to the time of Husain Shāh (1493-1518), an Arab by descent, who has been called by Mr. Vincent Smith "the best and most famous of the Muhammadan kings of Bengal". According to Professor Blochmann, Husain Shāh "first obtained power in the district of Farīdpur (Fathābād), where his earliest coins were struck";* and it has been pointed out that the names of Husain Shāh, his brother Yusuf Shāh and his sons Nasrat Shāh and Mahmūd Shāh are found in connexion with several *parganas* of Jessore, Khulna, Pābna, and Farīdpur, such as Nasratshāhi, Mahmūdshāhi, Yusufshāhi and Mahmūdābād.

Husain
Shāh.

Fathābād was the name of a mint-town of Husain Shāh, which has been identified with the town of Farīdpur; it was also the name of a large *sarkār* or division, which is believed to have been so called after Fath Shāh, king of Bengal from 1481 to 1486. This *sarkār* included part of Farīdpur and portions of Dacca and Bākarganj, as well as the islands of Dakshin Shāhbāzpur and Sandwip. The west of Farīdpur was included, with parts of Jessore and Nadia, in *Sarkār* Mahmūdābād, which is mentioned in the *Ain-i-Akbari* as surrounded by marshes, which helped to make the fort there impregnable, while elephants were found in its jungles.†

When the army of Akbar was engaged in the subjugation of Bengal in 1574, a separate force was detached under a general named Murād Khān for the conquest of south-east Bengal. According to the *Akbarnāma*, he invaded Fathābād (Farīdpur) and conquered it as well as *Sarkār*

Early
Mughal
rule.

* H. Blochmann, *Geography and History of Bengal*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873, pp. 227-28.

† Abdus Salam, Translation of the *Riyazu-s-Salatin* (1904), footnotes to pp. 28, 42, 48, 49, 129.

Bakla (Bākarganj). He then settled in Fathābād and died there six years later. About 13 miles from the town of Farīdpur is a village and railway station called Khānkhānapur, which, it has been suggested, was probably his residence. His sons were treacherously murdered at a feast to which they were invited by a Hindu zamīndār named Mukund, who was known as the Raja of Bhushna and Fathābād. Satrujit, the son of Mukund, was a recalcitrant chief, who gave the Governors of Bengal under Jahāngīr no little trouble. He refused to pay the customary *peshkash* or to attend the court at Dacca, but was at last captured and executed at Dacca about 1636. His son Sītārām Rāi, as will be shown later, carried on the family tradition of independence verging on rebellion.*

Bhushna is now a thana in the south-west of the Sadar or headquarters subdivision on the river Bārāsia, which here divides the district from Jessore, and contains the ruins of a fort.*

The Bārah
Bhuiyas.

Many years elapsed after Akbar's conquest before Mughal rule was firmly established in Eastern Bengal. Local chiefs, some Hindus, but mostly Muhammadans, maintained themselves in practical independence in this outlying part of the Mughal empire, aided by the great military revolt against Akbar and the presence of Afghan adventurers and rebels, as well as by the swamps and rivers of the delta, so formidable an obstacle to invading armies. When in 1586 the English merchant Ralph Fitch (the first Englishman to travel in Bengal) visited Srīpur, the headquarters of one of these principalities, he declared: "They be all hereabouts rebels against their king Zebaldim Echebar," i.e., Jalāluddīn Akbar, "for here are so many rivers and islands that they flee from one to another, whereby his horsemen cannot prevail against them." Jarric, again, who derived his information from Jesuit missionaries sent to Bengal at the end of the sixteenth century, stated that the chiefs of twelve kingdoms in Bengal obeyed no one, paid no tribute, and though they displayed a royal splendour, called themselves not kings but "Boiones." The latter is obviously a translation into Latin of the word Bhuiyas, these chiefs being known collectively as the Bārah (twelve) Bhuiyas.

* Abdus Salam, Translation of the *Riyazu-s-Salatin* (1904), footnotes on pp. 42, 265, 266, H. Blochmann, Translation of the *Ain-i-Akbari*, p. 374 and *Notes on the Geography and History of Bengal*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1873, pp. 228-29.

Srīpur which Fitch visited was a place near Rājābāri in the Dacca district and has long since been washed away by the Padma. It was the capital of two of the Bārah Bhuīyas Chānd Rai and Kedār Rai, whose territory is said to have extended from Rājābāri in Dacca to Kedārbāri in Farīdpur. At the latter place, which is in the Pālang thana, the site of the fort or residence of Chānd Rai and Kedār Rai is marked by a deep ditch and the remains of a road known as Kāchkigura road. Professor Blochmann speaks of a Bhuīya of Farīdpur and Dr. Wise conjectures that Mukund Rai of Bhushna was perhaps one of the twelve.* According to the article on Farīdpur district in the *Imperial Gazetteer* there was a Bhuīya named Sītārām Rāi, the remains of whose fort can still be seen at Kilābāri in the Bhushna thana; it is said that he was overthrown by the Mughals in a pitched battle at a place still known as Fatehpur or town of victory. It is questionable whether this potentate was not the Sītārām Rāi of a later date, who is referred to below.

The most powerful of the Bārah Bhuīyas was Isa Khān, whose capital was at Khizrpur or Katrabot in the Dacca district. "The chief king of all these countries", wrote Ralph Fitch, "is called Isacan and he is the chief of all the other kings". He appears to have been overlord of the Bhati, a region which included land along the course of the Brahmaputra (as it then was) and along the Meghna, as well as the Sundarbans. With him Masum Khān, one of the leaders in the great revolt against Akbar, took refuge, and an invasion followed by the Governor of Bengal, Shāhbāz Khān, which ended in the submission of Isa Khān (1584). It was, however, only temporary, and another campaign had to be undertaken before he was reduced (1594). Mughal rule was consolidated in Eastern Bengal after 1608, when Islām Khān, the Governor of Bengal, made Dacca his capital. One of his first steps was to overthrow the rebellious Afghans who held out in Bhati, under a leader called Osmān Khān, who is described as having his home in Dacca. They were finally crushed in a great battle fought in 1612 at an unknown place, which appears to have been somewhere in the neighbourhood of the Dacca district.

One of the reasons for the selection of Dacca as the capital was the necessity of taking steps to protect the

Magh
raids.

* On the Barah Bhuīyas of Eastern Bengal, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1874.

† The Rev. H. Hosten, *The Twelve Bhuīyas of Bengal*, *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, November 1913.

country against inroads by the Maghs or Arakanese, assisted by Portuguese pirates, from Chittagong and the islands at the mouth of the Meghna. An expedition against them was undertaken by Islām Khān, but this by no means put an end to their incursions. The Mughal *nawāra* or fleet was stationed at Khizrpur, but it suffered from neglect and disorganization. The Maghs and Portuguese, according to Bernier, "scoured the neighbouring seas in light galleys, called galleasses, entered the numerous arms and branches of the Ganges, ravaged the islands of Lower Bengal, and often penetrating forty or fifty leagues up the country surprised and carried away the entire population of villages". The contemporary Muhammadan historian Shihābuddin Tālish, mentions Bhushna as one of the areas exposed to their attacks and states that it was plundered in one of their incursions in 1663-64;* while local tradition in Farīdpur relates that their depredations drove the people into the inaccessible marshes, where protective moats are still to be seen, as for instance at Ujāni in Maksūdpur. The Maghs and Portuguese were at length overthrown in 1666 in a campaign undertaken by the Governor, Shaista Khān, which ended in the capture of their strongholds at Chittagong and the island of Sandwīp.

Sitārām
Rāi.

After this there is nothing of interest in connexion with the local history till we come to the beginning of the eighteenth century, when Murshid Kuli Khān included part of *Sarkār* Mahmūdābād in Rājshāhi and part in the newly formed Chakla of Bhushna, which he put under a *Faujdar* named Mīr Abu Turab, who was a connection of the imperial house. At this time Sitārām Rāi was the zamīndār of Mahmūdābād and resided at Mahmūdpur or Muhammadpur in the Jessore district at the junction of the Madhumati and Bārāsia rivers. Sitārām Rāi was a rebellious chief. According to the *Riyazu-s-Salātīn*, "being sheltered by forests and rivers he placed the hat of revolt on the head of vanity. Not submitting to the Viceroy, he declined to meet the imperial officers and closed against the latter all the avenues of access to his tract. He pillaged and raided the lands adjoining his zamīndārī and also quarrelled with the imperial garrisons and *Faujdar*s."

Mīr Abu Turab sent against him a force of 200 cavalry under an Afghan officer. Sitārām Rāi prudently retreated

* Jadunath Sarkar, *Shaista Khan in Bengal*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, June 1906, p. 258; *The Feringi Pirates of Chittagong*, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, June 1907, p. 424.

and happening to fall in with Mir Abu Turab when he was out hunting, killed him, thinking he was the Afghan officer. Anxious to atone for the mistake (which he said would cause him to be flayed alive and his estate desolated by the Nawāb), Sītārām Rāi handed over the body to the *Faujdar's* attendants, who took it to Bhushna and buried it in the vicinity of that place. The death of so highly connected a nobleman alarmed Murshid Kuli Khān, who feared the Emperor's displeasure. He appointed his own brother-in-law *Faujdar* and sent him with a large force to capture Sītārām Rāi. The whole country was raised against Sītārām Rāi. The neighbouring zamīndārs, warned that their estates would be confiscated if he escaped through them, raised their *posse comitatus* and Sītārām Rāi was captured. According to one account, he was impaled alive at Murshidābād, according to another he was dragged to the gallows with the last indignity of having his head enclosed in a cow hide (1712).

The vengeance of Murshid Kuli Khān extended to his wife, children and women of his family. They took refuge in Calcutta, where their presence was unknown to the English until next year, when a peremptory demand came for their surrender. The English promptly surrendered them, holding that the concealing and harbouring of these poor refugees "endangered vast prejudice to our affairs in Bengal, for the Diwān Jāfar Khān" (another name of Murshid Kuli Khān) "seeks all occasions possible to embroil all European traders". They were imprisoned for life according to one account and sold as slaves according to another. The estate of Sītārām Rāi in Jessore and Farīdpur was confiscated and given to Ramjīban Rāi of the Nātor Rāj family.*

When the British were granted the Diwāni of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa in 1765, the north-west of Farīdpur was included in the Rājshāhi zamindari and the remainder in the Dacca Niābat, *i.e.*, it was under a Naib (deputy) Subahdār or Naib Nāzim, who had his headquarters at Dacca. His jurisdiction extended over the present districts of Tippera, Noākhāli, Bākarganj and Sylhet, portions of Khulna, Jessore, Mymensingh and the Gāro Hills, as well as the greater part of Dacca and Farīdpur (with the exception of thana Bhushna and most of what is now the Goālund subdivision); in all, the area under his control covered about

BRITISH
PERIOD.

* *Riyazu-s-Salatīn* (translation, 1904), pp. 265-66; C. Stewart, *History of Bengal* (reprinted at Calcutta, 1903), pp. 432-34; C. R. Wilson, *Early Annals of the English in Bengal*, Vol. II, pp. 166-68.

25,000 square miles. At the time of the Permanent Settlement (1793) the area now comprising the Goālundō subdivision and part of the Gopālganj subdivision was included in Jessore, and the rest of Farīdpur was part of Dacca Jalālpur, which was a district made up of Dacca, Farīdpur and Bākarganj, with headquarters at Dacca; Jalālpur is the name of a *pargana* in the Farīdpur district.

This large and unwieldy district was gradually split up. Bākarganj was separated in 1797, owing to the prevalence of murders and dacoities, which called for decentralization, and in 1807 orders were issued moving the headquarters of Dacca Jalālpur to the town of Farīdpur, while the city of Dacca and part of the present Dacca district were detached from Dacca Jalālpur. That district at the same time received an addition of an area on the west, which was transferred from Jessore. Farīdpur was made a collectorate under an Assistant Collector in 1814 and next year this collectorate was entirely separated from that of Dacca. The district of Dacca Jalālpur was finally abolished by a Regulation passed in 1833 and Farīdpur was constituted an independent Joint Magistracy and Deputy Collectorship.

It should be explained that some of the smaller districts in Bengal at this time were placed in charge of Joint Magistrates, who were also Deputy Collectors for revenue work. Something like the modern subdivisions, they were created in order to enable crime and dacoity to be put down in tracts remote from the headquarters station. The Joint Magistrates in charge of them originally exercised joint jurisdiction with the District Magistrate, but in course of time came to exercise independent criminal powers; in revenue administration, however, they were never invested with powers greater than those of a Deputy Collector. This system was given up in 1859, when the Joint Magistrates and Deputy Collectors in charge of these small districts (eight in number) were raised to the full rank of District Magistrate and Collector in pursuance of the policy of reuniting judicial and executive functions.

As is well known, these functions were separated by Lord Cornwallis in 1793, when Collectors were relieved of magisterial duties and separate officers were appointed who united in one person the offices of Judge and Magistrate of the district. The work of these judicial officers increased until they were no longer able to cope with it. Accordingly, in 1831, they were divested of their magisterial duties, which

were transferred to the Magistrate, thus beginning the modern system of the Collector-Magistrate in charge of both executive and judicial work. The union of the two offices was, however, only temporary. The work of the Collectors became heavy, owing to the resumption of revenue-free tenures, and as a measure of relief orders were issued in 1837 for the separation of the offices of Magistrate and Collector. By 1845 the separation was complete in all districts but Farīdpur, Pābna, Mālda, Bogra, Bānkura, Bārāset, Bhuluaḥ (Noākhali), and Champāran (now in Bihar and Orissa), all of which were Joint Magistracies, and also the three districts of Orissa. The separation of judicial and executive functions proved a failure. Writing in 1854 Lord Dalhousie declared that it was injurious to the character of the administration and the interests of the people. The Collectors were of mature standing, highly paid and with very little work. The Magistrates were junior officers, inadequately paid and with very little work; they had not sufficient experience to do their work in such a manner as to command the confidence of the community. The system gave an opportunity for aggravated and mischievous stories of "Boy Judges" and idle Collectors shaking the pagoda tree. The reunion of judicial and executive functions was also urged by Lord Canning and the first Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal and was at last sanctioned in 1859. With the exception of Bārāset, which was made a subdivision, the Joint Magistracies, including Farīdpur, then became regular district charge, each under a Collector-Magistrate.

At this time Farīdpur had an area of only 1,312 square miles, and it has attained its present dimensions by transfers of land from the surrounding districts of Pābna, Dacca and Bakarganj. Since 1850 there have been other important administrative changes. The Mānikganj subdivision was transferred to Dacca in 1853, the Goāluṇḍo subdivision was constituted in 1871, when thana Pāngsa was acquired from Pābua, and the Mādāripur subdivision, which had been created in 1854 in consequence of the prevalence of river dacoities, was transferred to Farīdpur from Bakarganj in 1873. Farīdpur was removed from the jurisdiction of the Judge at Dacca in 1875, when a separate District Judge was appointed. An addition was made to the number of subdivisions in 1909 by the creation of the Gopāl-ganj subdivision, which was formed by detaching thana Maksūdpur from the Sadar subdivision and thanas Gopāl-ganj and Kotālipāra from the Mādāripur subdivision, which

was too heavy a charge for one officer. It remains to add that for more than a century the river Padma and the Meghna have tended to move north and east cutting away land along their left banks and building it up in this district, which has thus received a large accession of area.

No account of the history of the district would be complete without a mention of the decay of the indigo industry. In the first half of the nineteenth century indigo was largely cultivated and manufactured in thana Bāliakāndi and the contiguous parts of surrounding thanas. "The numerous factories," wrote Colonel Gastrell in his *Geographical and Statistical Report on the Districts of Jessore, Furreedpore and Backergunge* (1868), "scattered over these upper portions in the district of Furreedpore impart an air of civilization to, and greatly enliven, the scenery wherever they appear and present by no means the least interesting feature in the landscape. The fields around the factories are generally better tilled, good fair weather roads lead from and to them, the cattle that graze in the neighbouring fields look sleeker and better conditioned than in parts of the country where no Europeans are located; and there is invariably a well-attended and fairly supplied market and bazar close at hand."

The time came, however, when it no longer paid the cultivator to grow indigo. During the years 1857-60 the price of other crops had been doubled and the wages of agricultural labour also went up. The price paid by the planters for indigo remained stationary and no longer paid for the cost of production, but the raiyats were still required to cultivate indigo to the same extent as before. The system of advances under which indigo was grown was another source of irritation. The ryots, unable to repay them, sunk into chronic indebtedness. To add to their grievances, they were subject to subordinate oppression, *i.e.*, to the exactions and extortions of the underlings of the planters. At length, in 1860, the cultivators struck against growing this unprofitable crop in the districts of Nadia, Jessore and Faridpur. The industry lingered on for a time, but never revived. The area under indigo in Faridpur fell by 1868 to 10,000 acres, and by 1875 all the European concerns had been closed, with the exception of a factory at Nakanda; even there indigo was manufactured on quite a small scale. By 1880 the cultivation and manufacture of the dye may be said to have died out in Faridpur.

In 1905 the district was transferred with other districts of Eastern Bengal to the newly-formed province of Eastern Bengal and Assam and with them it was again reunited in 1912 with West Bengal in the present Presidency. Some of its inhabitants took part in the agitation against the partition of Bengal and also in the revolutionary movement, which has been such a tragic feature of the more recent history of Bengal. The Mādāripur subdivision acquired the reputation of being "one of the most prolific breeding-grounds of sedition and the scene of several anarchist outrages and political dacoities* ". According to the report of the Sedition Committee (1918), which is generally known as the Rowlatt Committee, from the name of its President, Mr. Justice Rowlatt, "a more or less independent group formed at Mādāripur, the south-eastern subdivision of Faridpur, an interesting tract among the great rivers where *bhādrālok* are numerous and English education widespread, but communication, except by water, almost impossible for most of the year. Their ideals and methods were similar to those of the Dacca party and they were responsible for three guerilla actions during the year (1912). They appear to have thought it safer to operate away from home, and all these outrages took place on the other side of the great Padma river in the Dacca district. The sums looted amounted to about Rs. 11,000. Their methods were terroristic. Armed with firearms, masked and bearing torches, they advanced in a body on the houses selected, made a great uproar, threw down bombs and fired shots to keep off the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and finally lined up before departure to the sound of a bugle." These outrages were largely the work of students and it is food for melancholy reflection that two ex-pupils of one school at Mādāripur were hanged, and a third committed murder and was afterwards killed fighting the police, while others were imprisoned or bound over to be of good behaviour.

* Bengal District Administration Report (1914), p. 63.

CHAPTER III.

THE PEOPLE.

GROWTH
OF POPULA-
TION.

Since 1872, when the first census was taken, there has been a continuous growth of population in the district. The increase represented 8·5 per cent. in 1881, 9·9 per cent. in 1891, 6·2 per cent. in 1901 and 8·6 per cent. in 1921. Within half a century the population has nearly doubled itself—the actual ratio of increase is 44:2 per cent.—and it now aggregates 2,249,858.

The growth of population, so far from being uniform throughout the district, has varied greatly in different parts. The least progressive tract is the Goālundo subdivision, which had a gain of 9 per cent. between 1881 and 1891, but lost 9·2 per cent. in the next decade, while it remained stationary from 1901 to 1911 and lost 1·3 per cent. of its population in the decade ending in 1921. This result is attributable to the partial or complete drying up of rivers, the reduced fertility of the soil, which has been its consequence, and the mortality due to endemic malaria and epidemic outbreaks of cholera.

The north of the Sadar subdivision, where conditions are similar to those prevailing in the Goālundo subdivision, has also a poor record. Here too the people have suffered from the silting up of rivers and from malaria, and some land has relapsed into jungle. In this area thana Bhushna, with Madhukhālī, sustained a steady loss of population between 1881 and 1911, the decreases in each decade being 4·9 per cent., 6·5 per cent. and 6·2 per cent., but since 1911 there has been a recovery, and in 1921 a gain of 5·8 per cent. was recorded. The remainder of the Sadar subdivision has made steady progress, and in the subdivision as a whole the number of inhabitants increased by 6 per cent. in 1901, by 5 per cent. in 1911 and by nearly 8 per cent. in 1921.

The south is the most prosperous and progressive part of Faridpur, and the population of both the Gopālganj subdivision and the Mādāripur subdivision has grown rapidly.

In the Gopālganj subdivision the number of inhabitants increased by 16 per cent. in 1891, by 15 per cent. in 1901 and by 9·2 per cent. in 1911, after which the rate of increase was reduced to 5·7 per cent. The Mādāripur subdivision similarly added 13 per cent. to its numbers in 1901 and in the next decade had to be content with an addition of 5·1 per cent. The progressiveness of the south is the result partly of healthiness and natural fertility and partly of the formation of rich alluvial accretions along the Padma and Meghna, which have attracted settlers from areas where land has been diluviated.

In the district as a whole there is a high degree of DENSITY. density, the soil supporting 949 persons to the square mile. Next to Howrah (1,882 to the square mile), Dacca (1,148) and Tippera (972), Faridpur is the most thickly populated district in Bengal; and if the cultivated area only is taken into account, the density rises to the high figure of 1,202 per square mile. Mr. Thomson, Superintendent of Census Operations in Bengal in 1921, is indeed of opinion that the district must shortly reach a condition in which there will be little margin for further pressure on the soil

In respect of density, there is a marked difference between the north of the district, where conditions approximate to those of Nadia and Jessore, and the south, which resembles a typical Eastern Bengal district. The Goālando subdivision, for instance, supports only 728 persons to the square mile and is somewhat less thickly populated than the Kush-tia subdivision of Nadia. In the Gopālganj subdivision the figures is 858, but the Mādāripur subdivision, where villages are crowded along the river Ariāl Khān, has a teeming population; there are 1,266 persons per square mile, which may be compared with the figure for the Dacca district, viz., 1,148. The Sadar subdivision has affinities to both the north and south of the district. In thanas Bhānga and Sadarpur, which adjoin the Mādāripur subdivision, density reaches 1,357 and 926, respectively, per square mile, but in the north the average is much lower, and the figure for the subdivision as a whole is consequently reduced to 819.

In this connection there are two features of some interest. One is that density falls as the rivers Padma and Meghna are approached. The explanation is that much of the land along these great waterways consists of new accretions, and although these are cultivated almost as soon as they appear above water, it takes some years for them to be covered

with homesteads as densely as old centres of habitation inland. The other noticeable feature is the comparatively high density of population in the marsh area. As explained by Mr. Jack in his *Settlement Report of Faridpur*, "the density of population in thanas, such as Maksūdpur, Gopālganj, Nagarkānda and Kotālipāra, which are little more than vast stretches of marsh, is surprising, although not to local observers, to whom it has been known ever since the first census was taken. The desolate appearance of the country, which is due to the large unbroken expanses of water visible in every direction, is really deceptive, as the water subsides sufficiently to permit a heavy crop to grow nearly everywhere. . . . Although the extent to which the marsh is culturable differs each year, yet the crop rarely fails and is usually bountiful, while fish can be obtained in great quantity from the marshes, and reeds also are cut and sold, so that even the uncultivated parts of the country produce a considerable income".

MIGRATION.

Migration is not an important economic factor in Faridpur. The number of immigrants, *i.e.*, persons born outside the district who were present in it at the time of the census, was 90,000 in 1921, and that of emigrants, or persons born in the district but enumerated elsewhere, was 85,000. There is therefore practically no loss on account of the movement of population. The general trend of migration is to and from neighbouring districts. Immigrants mostly come from Dacca, Pābna, Nadia and Jessore, and the inhabitants of the district for the most part go to Bākarganj, Tippera and Khulna. The number of immigrants from outside Bengal is proportionately very much smaller than in Dacca and Mymensingh.

Much of the immigration is due to changes in the courses of the rivers Padma and Meghna. Settlers from adjoining districts are attracted by the fertile alluvial accretions in Faridpur, especially if their own land has been cut away by the erosion of those rivers. Similarly cultivators go from Faridpur to the *chars* thrown up in Bākarganj, particularly in the Dakshin Shāhbāzpur island, or settle in the Sundarbans. Much of the emigration is of a temporary or periodic character. For instance, every year large numbers of men go to Bākarganj to reap the rice crop or to cut timber in the Sundarbans and then return to their homes.

TOWNS AND VILLAGES.

There are only four places which can advance a claim to be regarded as towns, *viz.*, Mādāripur (25,297), Faridpur (14,503), Rājbari (7,275), and Gopālganj (3,478); the figures

after each represent the population at the census of 1921. The most progressive is Mādāripur, which owes its importance to being a centre of the jute collecting trade and to its position on the system of inland waterways known as the Mādāripur Bil route, by which the produce of large tracts in Eastern Bengal finds its way to Calcutta. This town increased its population by nearly one-third in the decade ending in 1921. Farīdpur, which has had an increase of nearly 10 per cent. in the same period, is of the usual type of headquarters stations in Bengal, *i.e.*, it derives its importance from being the centre of local administration and also of local trade, for it imports cloth, salt, kerosene oil and other articles and distributes them to the rural population. The same remarks apply to Rājbari and Gopālganj, both subdivisional headquarters, the latter of which was treated as a town at the census of 1921, but has not yet sufficiently advanced for a municipal constitution.

Altogether 97·8 per cent. of the people live in villages. These are usually not compact blocks of houses on a central site, but collections of detached homesteads, enclosed in small orchards and lining the streams which have raised their banks by the deposit of silt above the level of the rice fields. Their common features and different characteristics may be realized from the description given in Mr. Jack's *Economic Life of a Bengal District*. "In the English sense of the word, there is rarely a village at all, although in several parts of the district the homesteads of the villagers are grouped together in clusters. In the older north the houses usually straggle at irregular intervals along the banks of the streams and are surrounded by orchards or at least by some garden and a few trees. The hamlets in the depressions are also built in some kind of irregular line, but with houses closer together and each raised on a separate mound and usually shaded by several fruit-trees. In the south-western swamps the long line of homesteads is rarer, although it is always found, with much garden, beside the rivers; but elsewhere it gives place to the circular formation round a tank, and the houses are fewer and very close together and the trees are very few. In the alluvial south-east the land is too recently formed and too liable to be swept away to encourage the planting of a slow-growing orchard, but the normal line of detached homesteads is often seen, although isolated homesteads built by each cultivator on his own land are no less common. The newer lands are bare of trees and only in the older formations are orchards visible.

“ In all these villages there is rarely a village road; usually a footpath leads from house to house, but often there is not a path at all. Nowhere are houses built of masonry; not a house in the district is semi-detached; nor is there a single row of houses, as is the habit in European villages. As the village shop is not a Bengal institution, shops are found only in the markets of the more important centres. . . . Only rarely is there a place of worship, always the mosque of the Muhammadans. Worship among the Hindus is a family affair celebrated in their own houses, while amongst the Muhammadans it consists of prayers and preaching, which do not necessarily require a mosque, but may be conducted in the open air.”

RELI-
GIONS.
Hindus
and
Muham-
madans.

Muhammadans number altogether 1,427,837 or 63 per cent. of the population, while Hindus, with a strength of 815,634, represent 36 per cent. In 1881 the Muhammadans and Hindus were 60 and 40 per cent., respectively, of the district population, and the difference between those and the present proportions is due to the fact that the Muhammadans have increased at a faster rate than the Hindus; the former added 50 per cent. and the latter 20 per cent. to their numbers between 1872 and 1911.

As for the geographical distribution of the two communities, it may be predicated, as a rough generalization, that the Muhammadans predominate in the riverside lands and *chars* and the Hindus in the inland marshes, where the Namasudras are specially numerous. In all the four towns the Hindus are more numerous than the Muhammadans, but in rural areas the proportions are reversed, except in the Gopālganj subdivision, which is largely a marshy area. There the Hindus outnumber the Muhammadans by 81,000; in the other subdivisions they are in a minority, there being approximately two Muhammadans to every Hindu in the Sadar and Gōālundo subdivisions, while in the Mādāripur subdivision there are seven Muhammadans to three Hindus.

Christians.

The Christians aggregate only 6,299—an increase of only 3,538 since 1872, at which time an Indian Christian community had been established in the village of Kāligrām in the Jiharpur Bil. The majority of the Christians are converted Namasudras, among whom the English Baptist Mission, the Australian Baptist Mission and the Church Missionary Society work. The activities of these missions is not to be gauged solely by the number of converts, for they have also done good in the field of education.

The Brahmo Samāj was established at Farīdpur in 1857 with 10 followers. The number of its adherents at the last census was still only 68. Brahmo Samaj.

The majority of the Muhammadans of Farīdpur are Farāzis, a generic name applied to two sects. So little is known of the history of these sects, of which one was founded by a Muhammadan of Farīdpur, that in spite of their length no apology is needed for the following extracts from a paper, *The Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal*, written by Dr. James Wise some time after the census of 1872 and published in Part III of the Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal for 1894; this, so far as the author of this volume is aware, is the only complete account of their origin and tenets. Muham-
madan
sects.

Dr. Wise states that four sects differing in many important particulars are found among the Muhammadans of Eastern Bengal, viz. :—

1. Sābiqī, of conservative tendencies, to which belong the majority of the landholders and, with few exceptions, the descendants of the old Sunni families.
2. Farāzī, or those following the *farāz* or divine command. Shari'atullah and his son Dudhu Miyān founded this sect, the members of which, though differing little from the Wahābi, repudiate that name and refuse to pray standing behind a person belonging to the first or third sect or even to eat or drink with them.
3. Ta'aiyuni (from the Arabic *ta'ayyun*, establishing or manifesting) or Rāhi (from the Persian for a traveller) are the followers of Karāmat Ali and the Patna School. They comprise the vast majority of the Dacca cultivators, thatchers and hide merchants.
4. Rafiyadain, so called from their elevating their hands to the ears each time that the words "Allah Akbar" are pronounced in the course of prayer, while all the other sects only do so at the beginning of the invocation. They also fold their arms across the chest when praying instead of over the navel; and at the end of each supplication call out in a loud tone of voice Amin or Amen. According to Dr. Wise, they are the real Wahābis of Eastern Bengal and they are said to be

more numerous than the Sābiqi. Many of the most enterprising and prosperous traders belong to this puritanical body.

Shariatullah.

“The first person,” Dr. Wise wrote, “who stirred his countrymen, by resuscitating the dormant spirit of their faith, was Hāji Shariatullah, born of obscure parents, probably Jolahas or weavers, who resided in a village of pargana Bandarkhola, zila Faridpur. When eighteen years of age he made the pilgrimage to Mecca, but instead of returning, as was usual, he remained a disciple of the Wahābi leaders then ruling the sacred city. About 1820, after an absence of twenty years, he came back to India a skilful disputer and a good Arabic scholar. On his way to his home he fell among dacoits, who plundered him of everything, including many memorials of his residence in Arabia, and, finding life insupportable without books or relics, he joined himself to the gang and shared their many wanderings. The simplicity of his religious convictions awakened the consciences of these wicked men, who ultimately became his most zealous followers. Such is the story told at the present day of the first step taken by this remarkable man. For several years Shariatullah quietly disseminated his new doctrines in the villages of his native district, encountering much opposition and abuse; but, attracting a band of devoted followers, he by degrees acquired the reputation of a holy man.

“The chief Wahābi innovations introduced by him were the non-observance of the Friday prayers, of the two great Ids and of the Muharram, and he ordered that the titles of Ustād and Shāgird, terms which did not suggest complete submission, should in future be used in the place of Pīr and Murīd, which had for ages been the respective designations of the master and his pupil. He also prohibited the laying on of hands which was customary at the initiation of a disciple, but required from all *tauba* or penitence for past sins and a resolution to lead a more righteous and godly life for the future. It is a curious fact that none of these new ideas excited much opposition, but on his promulgating the dogma that it was a deadly sin, and one derived from the Hindus, to allow a midwife to cut the navel cord when it was the obvious duty of the father to do so, he roused a spirit of revolt, which caused many to fall away. The zamīndārs were alarmed at the spread of the new creed, which bound the Muhammadan peasantry together as one man. Disputes and quarrels soon arose, and Shariatullah was driven from

Nayābāri in the Dacca district, where he had settled, and returned to his birthplace.

“ There he resumed his ministry and in a short time enlisted the vast majority of the uneducated and most excitable classes of the Muhammadan population. His influence became unbounded and no one hesitated to carry out his orders. He acted with great prudence and caution, rarely assuming any other character than that of a religious reformer. The movement originated by this man attracted little attention during his lifetime and his name is rarely met with in the annals of that day. On looking back, however, at his career, there is much to repay inquiry. That he, born of poor Muhammadan weavers amid the swamps of Eastern Bengal, should have been the first preacher to denounce the superstitions and corruptions which a long contact with Hindu polytheism had developed, is sufficiently remarkable, but that the apathetic and careless Bengali peasant should have been roused to enthusiasm is still more extraordinary. To effect this required a sincere and sympathetic preacher, and no one ever appealed more strongly to the sympathies of a people than Sharītaullah. Springing from one of their lowest and most despised classes, his blameless and exemplary life was admired by his countrymen, who venerated him as a father able to advise them in seasons of adversity and give consolation in times of affliction. He is described as a man of middle height, of fair complexion and with a long handsome beard. He usually had his head covered with a voluminous turban, and his waist-cloth, worn like a petticoat, was not triced up as it is by Hindus and Muhammadans generally.

“ A very different person was his son Muhammad Mushin, better known as Dudhu Miyān, who, though of ordinary abilities, exerted an influence far surpassing that of his father. His name is a household word throughout the districts of Farīdpur, Pābna, Bākarganj, Dacca and Noākhāli, and the number of his followers at the present day testifies to the thoroughness of the work that he and his father accomplished. Dudhu Miyān was born in 1819 and, while still young, visited Mecca, where his followers were taught to believe that visions and revelations of a nature tending to his future exaltation were vouchsafed to him. On his return, he devoted himself to the spread of his father's doctrines and to others which he introduced. For instance, he insisted upon his disciples eating the common grasshopper (*phanga*), which they abhorred, because the locust (*tidda*) was used as food in Arabia; and

Dudhu
Miyān.

vigorously contended that there was no greater difference between the two insects than between the goat of their villages and one from the banks of the Jamuna.

“The most remarkable advance made during Dudhu Miyān’s lifetime was the organization of a society. Following the example of the Vaishnavas, he partitioned Eastern Bengal into circles and appointed a *khalīfa* or agent to each, to keep the sect together, make proselytes and collect contributions for the furtherance of the objects of the association. They further kept Dudhu Miyān, who was usually called the Pīr or simply Maulvi, acquainted with everything occurring within their jurisdiction, and wherever a zamīndār tried to enforce his legal rights against one of the sect, funds were provided to sue him in the courts, or, if it could be safely done, club-men were sent to destroy his property and thrash his servants. During his father’s lifetime the sect had never opposed or come in contact with the law of the land; but the high-handed actions of the son united zamīndārs and indigo planters against him. He tried to compel all Muhammadan ryots to join his sect, and, on refusal, caused them to be beaten, excommunicated from the society of the faithful and their crops destroyed. The zamīndārs again endeavoured to prevent their tenants joining and, it is said, often punished and tortured the disobedient. A mode of torture, intensely painful, but which left no marks to implicate any one, is said to have been adopted on both sides. The beards of recalcitrant ryots were tied together and red chilli powder given as snuff. Coercion, however, failed and the landholders did little to check the onward spread of the revival.

“It was among the cultivators and village workmen that Dudhu Miyān gained the largest number of converts. He asserted the equality of mankind and taught that the welfare of the lowest and poorest was as much an object of interest as that of the highest and richest. When a brother fell into distress, it was, he taught, the duty of his neighbours to assist him, and nothing, he affirmed, was criminal or unjustifiable which had this object in view. Enemies in consequence alleged that witnesses were suborned and paid for by the funds of the association. Dudhu Miyān and the Hājīs, as his followers were originally called, became objects of dread to the Hindu, old Muhammadan and European landlords. Evidence to convict a prisoner could not be got and outrages were committed with perfect impunity.

“ It was, however, against the levying of illegal cesses by landlords that Dudhu Miyān made his most determined stand. That a Muhammadan ryot should be obliged to contribute towards the decoration of the image of Durga or towards the support of any of the idolatrous rites of his Hindu landlord were intolerable acts of oppression. In this he was certainly right, as the only apology for their continuance is their antiquity and adaptation to the feelings of the people. But he advanced a step further when he proclaimed that the earth is God’s and that no one has a right to occupy it as an inheritance or levy taxes upon it. The peasantry were therefore persuaded to settle on khās mahāl lands managed directly by the Government and escape the payment of any taxes but that of the land revenue claimed by the State.

“ Dudhu Miyān was constantly compromising himself by the lawlessness of his conduct. In 1838 he was charged with instigating the plunder of several houses; in 1841 he was committed to the sessions on a charge of murder, but was acquitted; in 1844 he was tried for trespass and illegal assembly, and in 1846 for abduction and plunder. The riot of 1838 assumed at one time a very threatening aspect, and a detachment of sepoy was sent from Dacca to quell any disturbance. It was, however, found impossible to induce witnesses to give evidence and on each occasion he was acquitted. At Bahādurpur, where he generally resided, every Musalmān stranger was fed, while Eastern Bengal was overrun by his spies, and the interests of the whole neighbourhood were in his keeping. He settled disputes, administered summary justice, and punished any Hindu, Muhammadan or Farangi who dared to bring a suit for recovery of debt in the adjoining Munsif’s court instead of referring the case to his decision. Emissaries carried his orders to distant villages, and his letters, signed *Ahmad nām malūm*, often had the ordinary Hindu superscription to allay suspicion. He taught that there was no sin in persecuting those who refused to embrace his doctrines or who appealed against the orders of the society and its constituted leaders.

“ Having broken the law with impunity, Dudhu Miyān took a bolder step. Mr. A. Dunlop, an indigo-planter of Pānch-char factory in Farīdpur, had for many years been an uncompromising opponent and several times succeeded in causing the Miyān to be arrested and tried for illegal actions. The Miyān, bent on revenge, easily found willing agents to execute his orders. On the 5th of December 1846, a large

body of armed men attacked and burned to the ground the factory of Pānch-char. After pillaging the adjoining village then departed, taking with them the Brahman *gomāshṭa*, who was afterwards cruelly murdered in the Bākarganj district. Dudhu Miyān and sixty-two of his followers were tried by the Sessions Judge of Faridpur in July 1847 and convicted; but, on appeal to the Sadar Adalat, they were acquitted. In 1857, Dudhu Miyān was thrown into prison, and the story goes that he would have been released if he had not boasted that fifty thousand men would answer to his summons and march whithersoever he ordered them.

“ Several actions of their Pīr must have been disapproved of by many of his followers, as, for instance, when he forcibly carried off a Brahmani girl and made her his *nikah* wife; but even this violent act did not cause them to desert him. On the contrary, they believed in him to the last and liberally spent their hard-earned savings in promoting the interests of the sect. At one time a few disciples seceded. They had been to Mecca and ascertained that the teaching of Maulavi Karāmat Ali was orthodox, while that of their own spiritual chief was Wahābi in tendency and heterodox. This secession exasperated Dudhu Miyān to such a pitch, that he instructed his people to kill the renegades wherever and whenever found.

“ Dudhu Miyān is described as having been a tall handsome man with a dark flowing bearded and a large turban wound round his head. He died at Bahādurpur, 24th September 1860, and was buried there, but the Ariāl Khān river has within the last few years washed away every trace of his house and tomb. His wealth, at one time considerable, being expended on law suits and intrigues, his family was left poor. Three sons survive, of whom none have as yet exhibited any of the energy and abilities of their father. The sect is consequently diminishing in number and many families are yearly joining the next, or Ta'aiyuni, division. At the present day the term Farāzi is indiscriminately used when speaking either of the sect founded by Sharīatullah or that established by Karāmat Ali; but the Muhammadans of Dacca call the followers of Dudhu Miyān Farāzis, while those obeying the teaching of the Patna school are styled Ta'aiyuni.

The
Ta'aiyuni;

“ While Dudhu Miyān was enrolling disciples in Eastern Bengal, other reforms were stirring up the dormant fanaticism of their brethren in other districts, and the wave pass-

ing over the plains of Faridpur received a fresh impulse from other sources. . . Far more important than the revival begun by Shariatullah was that initiated by Sayyid Ahmad at Patna in 1820. At first this new association claimed to be identical with that started by Shariatullah; but it was soon apparent that their aims were different and antagonistic. Both concurred in repudiating the numerous superstitions observed by all classes of Muhammadans, but the Ta'aiyuni or Patna sect introduced many innovations unknown to the followers of Shariatullah and Dudhu Miyān. By the Arabs as well as the Ta'aiyuni, the Farāzis are known as Wahābis, a name, however, repudiated by all but the extreme party called Rafiyadain.

"The first preacher (*wāz*) of the Patna school who visited Eastern Bengal was Muhammad Ali, a Khalifa appointed by Sayyid Ahmad, whose censures were chiefly directed against the practice of Hindu superstitions. He forbade the reading of the *ḡāṭiḥa* or prayer for the dead, the offering of *shirni* or sweetmeats at the tombs of holy men, and the use of music at weddings. The next was Wilāyat Ali, one of the four original *khalīfas* chosen by Sayyid Ahmad at Patna in 1820. His opinions were still more pronounced and more deeply tinged with Wahābi formalism. For example, he enjoined the frequent raising of the hands and the utterance in a loud tone of voice of the word *Amīn* at the end of each prayer. He also maintained that the *Hadīs*, or traditionary sayings and doings of Muhammad, contained authoritative instruction on many points, being only second to the *Korān* in value.

"The most successful and celebrated missionaries, however, were Maulavis Karāmat Ali, Zain-ul-abadīn and an Arab, Sayyid Muhammad Jamāl-ul-Jail, whose preaching among the villages of Eastern Bengal has had the most momentous effects, not only by uniting under one banner the vast majority of the middle and working classes, but also by arousing the intolerant spirit of Muhammadanism, which had lain dormant for nearly a century. Little is known regarding the history of Zain-ul-abadīn, but of Maulavi Karāmat Ali, who died in 1874, full particulars are available. He was the son of the *sarishtadār* of the Jaunpur Collectrate. When sixteen years of age, he studied under Maulana Abdul Azīz, of Delhi, and afterwards under Ahmadullah, a famous teacher of Jaunpur. Excited by the preachings of Sayyid Ahmad, he followed that remarkable man to Calcutta, became his disciple and accompanied him

to Mecca. On his return he proved himself one of the most valuable deputies of the Patna Mission.

“ Sayyid Muhammad Jamāl-ul-lail fled from Medina because his father insisted on his marrying an Arab damsel. He came to Dacca about 1843 and joined with Karāmat Ali in disseminating the new doctrines. Although ignorant of Bengali and hardly acquainted with Hindustani, his commanding figure, luxuriant beard and voluminous turban were, in the eyes of the ignorant villagers, credentials of his sincerity and capacity and soon attracted to him a numerous circle of disciples. He married Bengali wives, one of whom, a resident of Dhāmrai, possessed a considerable property. In 1854, incensed by the speculations of the *amla*, he decided, contrary to the wishes of the other shareholders, to collect the rents himself. His opponents assembled club-men and tried to capture him, but, boiling with anger, he rushed within doors, seized a gun and wounded several of the assailants. For this offence he was tried and sentenced to seven years’ imprisonment in the Rājshāhi jail. On the expiry of his term he returned to Dacca, an altered man, much broken in spirit. He died in August 1872 and was buried in the village of Naichabandtala opposite Dacca.

“ The doctrines taught by these later *khalīfas* differed materially from those of Muhammad Ali Wilāyat Ali. The former held that the Hadīs, a human compilation and therefore full of errors, could not be considered an infallible guide; but admitted that the teaching of the Imams, as contained in the Fiqah or practical jurisprudence, were binding, although contradictory passages and a diversity of doctrines could be found in them. These defects were not, they argued, so vital nor the tenets grounded on the various readings so absolute as to justify Muhammadans in breaking asunder the bonds uniting the world of Islam. Furthermore, these reformers denounced the employment of music at weddings as being a sensual and decomposing pleasure, the offering up of the *fātiha* at the grave of deceased relatives, and the worship of Pirs and other saintly personages. These opinions regarding the Hadīs nad Fiqah had always been held by the Muhammadans of Bengal, but the assertion that music was immoral and that the *fātiha* as well as the becoming veneration of Pirs were sinful, aroused much opposition. In later years Karāmat Ali made the important admission that India under the British rule was not Dār-ul-harb, a country where the

infidels were the legitimate objects of attack, as had been maintained by Dudhu Miyān and Wilāyat Ali.

“The principal doctrines of these reformers, being founded on the fundamental truths of Islām, excited at first no little surprise, as they had been lost sight of by the Hīnduized Musalmans of Bengal. According to them, man, by nature feeble and prone to evil, cannot without assistance learn to know God or obey his commands. Muhammad is the only true mediator between God and his rebellious children, but the holy men of past ages possess a certain limited power of obtaining pardon for the penitent. It is therefore regarded by the Ta’aiyuni as a meritorious act to make offerings, or *lillahi*, at the graves of saints in the name of God, as they believe that the supplicant, being moved by the associations of the place, prays with greater sincerity and fervour. The custom, however, observed in Bengal for ages, of presenting bread to the manes of ancestors on the Shab-i-barāt and of making offerings at the tombs of deceased relatives and friends on the fourth, tenth, twentieth and fortieth days after death, were denounced as deadly sins.

“The Ta’aiyuni observe the five daily prayers, and before each they clean their teeth with a piece of stick (*miswak*), rinse their mouths and wash their hands. They strictly observe the *juma namāz* or Friday prayer in the mosque, which Faiāzis and Wahābis dispense with; and before leaving their homes it is customary to shave, bathe and put on clean garments. The stricter members also observe the *tahajjud* or prayer at 3 a.m. The Ta’aiyuni furthermore dresses differently from any other Muhammadan. His loins are ungirded, in expectation of the advent of the long-looked for Imām Mahdi and, instead of the ordinary waist-string, or *kardhami*, he wears a leather strap (*tasma*). He is also enjoined to allow his beard to grow and to wear his hair long or, better still, to shave it entirely off, and is forbidden to eat food off a golden or silver dish or to touch with his lips the mouth-piece of a tobacco-pipe mounted with silver. Further, he must not pray in silken garments, as was often the custom formerly, but in cotton or woollen attire. Women are as punctilious as men, especially in attending to the regular prayers. Of late years they have laid aside the graceful *sāri* and adopted a jacket with long sleeves, which does not add to their comeliness, and, still more important, is not admired by females of other classes.

They also object to staining their feet and nails with henna or *mehndi*, as is done throughout most parts of Muhammadan Asia.

“ Another usage has a most important bearing on the business habits of this class of Muhammadans Interest (*sūd*) is denounced by the Maulavis, and as large profits (*manāfi*) are legitimate, among them are found great traders in jute, hides, rice and country produce generally who never join with professional bankers or money-lenders, unless they agree to division of profits instead of a certain rate of interest. When giving an advance of money, it is usually stipulated that the sum shall be repaid within a certain period and that an eighth or fourth of the net profit shall be paid to the lender in addition to the principal. By this arrangement the lender often receives more than the market rate of interest, but if the payment be delayed, nothing additional is gained. This system of profits however is virtually interest under another name. . .

“ It would not be unreasonable to infer that the promulgation of these new puritanical doctrines would produce a corresponding improvement in the character of the members; but according to the best authorities, the Maulavis, no change is yet visible. On being asked if the Muhammadans of his sect oftener spoke the truth than those of the old school, a Maulavi replied that the latter lied, being ignorant of the moral turpitude thereby incurred, but that the former, who were able to distinguish between what was right and what was wrong, uttered falsehoods more circumstantially and glibly.

“ The Ta’aiyuni differ in many important respects from the Farāzi and Wahābi. They not only regard the Friday prayer with peculiar reverence, but often make it, like Sunday in Europe, a day for popular demonstrations and for forming combinations against the zamīndārs. . . The *chars* or alluvial islands along the Ganges and Meghna are the favourite retreats of Farāzi ryots, and the lands being managed directly by Government and not by any zamīndār or middleman, the arbitrary taxes sanctioned by the ancient customs of the country are no longer collected.”

The predominant caste, in point of numbers, is that of the Namasudras, who number 411,467 and account for over one-half of the whole Hindu population of the district. This great caste—the second Hindu caste in Bengal in numerical strength—has its habitat in the lower delta and is found

in greatest strength in the south-west of Faridpur and the districts of Bākarganj, Khulna and Jessore. The Faridpur district contains more Namasudras than any other district, the number resident in it being over one-fifth of the aggregate for the entire province.

It is a progressive caste in more than one way. It has grown steadily and largely, while other Hindu castes have had only slight increases. Its members also have done much to improve both their economic and social status. Formerly a man of this community, when asked his caste, replied Chandāl or Chang or Charal, and they were generally known as Chandāls. As their circumstances and education improved, they began to adopt the more honorific name of Namasudra, which received official recognition; for, on account of the resentment which the name Chandāl aroused, they were entered in the census table of castes as Namasudra or Chandāl in 1891, as Namasudra (Chandāl) in 1901 and as Namasudra only in 1911 and 1921.

The outstanding feature of their geographical distribution is that they are denizens of the swamps. Their own tradition is that they sought a refuge there from the persecutions of the high caste Hindus. Another and more probable theory is that they are the autochthones of Eastern Bengal, aboriginals who found a refuge in the marshes, retreating there before the advance of more powerful races. Whatever their origin, they are a hardy and muscular race, capable of enduring much exposure and fatigue. They live by agriculture and fishing, and are expert boatmen; one curious thing is that the women smoke nearly as much as the men.

For some generations past they have shown a spirit of sturdy independence. In 1873 they proclaimed a general strike, refusing to serve any one of the upper classes, in whatever capacity, unless a better position in the hierarchy of castes was accorded to them. In more recent times, as a protest against the contemptuous treatment they received from the higher castes, they refused to listen to the request of members of those castes, that they should join in the agitation against the partition of Bengal, and declined to take part in any movement directed against the established Government. They have also taken up education as a means of advancement with real earnest and are steadily progressing in that respect.

The only other castes with a strength of over 25,000 are **Kayasths** (82,912), **Brahmans** (50,877), **Shāhas** (36,049) and **Other castes**.

Mālos (26,575). Half the Brahmans are found in the Mādāripur subdivision, where they appear to have had colonies from very early times; the Mādāripur and Pālang thanas in this subdivision were formerly part of the Bīkrāmpur *pargana*, a name applied generally to a tract, inhabited by high caste Hindus, which covers areas now included in several other *parganas*, such as Kārtikpur, Baikunthapur, Idilpur, Mādāripur, Bāngrora and Birmohan. By occupation they follow their priestly profession and also own land to a considerable extent. The Kayasths are also numerous in the same area; as elsewhere, they are engaged in professional pursuits and clerical service. The Shāhas are a prosperous class of merchants and traders, and the Mālos are fishermen and boatmen, whose number is not surprising, considering the extent of rivers and marshes in the district.

OCCUPATIONS.

The census figures for occupations are eloquent of the extent to which agriculture predominates in the economic life of the district. Altogether $1\frac{3}{4}$ million persons or 78 per cent. of the population are dependent on agriculture for their livelihood. Of these, 110,000 derive their income from the rent of agricultural land, *i.e.*, landlords or their families. Those who subsist on the actual cultivation of the land number 1,550,000. Industries support 161,000 persons or 7 per cent. of the population, commerce or trade the same number, and the professions 56,000 or $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent.

ASSOCIATIONS.

There are two public associations recognized by Government. The first is the Faridpur District Association, which was established in 1907 and has a membership of about 200. It deals with questions affecting local self-government, education, public health and the development of local industries. The other is the Faridpur District Muhammadan Association, which has a membership of about 150. It is concerned chiefly with the interests, political, religious and educational, of the Muhammadan community. In addition to these associations, mention should be made of the Faridpur Suhrid Sabha, which furthers the spread of female education in the district, of the Sahitya Parishād at Faridpur which is identified with the development of literary culture and of the Anjumān Maʿfidul Islām of Mādāripur, which also takes an active interest in the spread of education.

NEWS-PAPERS.

No less than five weekly newspapers and three monthly magazines are published in the district, which in this respect has no reason to complain of quantity. The newspapers are the *Sanjāy* or Indian Reporter and the *Faridpur*

Hitaishini, both published at Farīdpur town, the *Sangsar* and *Rājbari Patrika*, both published at Rājbari, and the *Kangal*, published at Pāngsa. The magazines, which are all published in the town of Farīdpur, are the *Krishikatha Barta* and *Arya Kayastha Prativa*.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ECONOMIC CONDITION OF THE PEOPLE.

AN
ECONOMIC
SURVEY.

One of the vexed questions of modern politics in India is the economic condition of the people. It is sometimes asserted that the average income a head in India is only Rs. 30—a figure apparently based on an estimate made last century, when a minimum computation of income was made. There is much uncertainty on the subject and demands are not infrequently made for a thorough investigation, a comprehensive survey to show what are the annual income and expenditure and what is, in fact, the real economic condition of the people. Such a survey has already been made in Faridpur by the late Mr. J. C. Jack, I.C.S. As Settlement Officer of Faridpur, with a staff of young and eager University graduates, he carried out what he called an “economic cadastre”, in which the assets and expenditure of the inhabitants of the district were carefully calculated. The inquiry, which was conducted between the years 1906 and 1910, extended to 1,861,000 persons, of whom 77 per cent. were agricultural and the remaining 23 per cent. non-agricultural; and the results were analyzed by Mr. Jack in a book, *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, published by the Oxford University Press in 1916. The book is a remarkable *tour de force*, written in the short space of five days’ leave before Mr. Jack returned to the front in France, where he met his death after attaining the rank of Major and being awarded the Military Cross. This chapter is based on the conclusions arrived at in that book, supplemented to a small extent by information contained in Mr. Jack’s *Settlement Report of Faridpur* (1916).

INCOME
AND
EXPENDI-
TURE.

To summarize briefly the broad results, it was found that, taking all classes together, the average income per head is Rs. 52, the average debt Rs. 11 and the average taxation Rs. 2½. With the figure of average annual income may be compared the estimate of Rs. 60 a head for all India given by the Under-Secretary of State for India in the House of Commons in May 1924, that of a little over Rs. 100 a head

for Madras, computed by the Statistical Branch of the Department of Agriculture in that province, and the estimate of Rs. 75 for rural areas and of Rs. 100 for urban areas in Bombay, which is based on information collected during the census of 1921. The annual income in Faridpur appears very small, judged by European standards, but it must be taken in combination with the annual expenditure and considered with the actual needs of the people and the prices paid for their satisfaction, which are very different from those in Europe. The climate for instance, makes the clothing bill a small one while no one outside a town lives in a hired house; all build and own their houses.

Family budgets were prepared by over 200 officers after a close scrutiny of the expenditure and mode of living of more than 2,000 families. The result was to show that an annual expenditure of Rs. 50 a head was required to keep a family in comfort, while the normal annual expenditure of a family in extreme indigence was Rs. 20 a head. The family was taken as consisting of five persons, viz., two adult males, one adult female and two children (one male and the other female). The total made provision for (1) food, including rice, salt, oil, spices, fish, vegetables, milk and *ghī*; (2) other necessities, including clothes, furniture, household utensils, petty house repairs, kerosene oil for lighting the house, and even those aids to a life of comfort, betel-leaf for chewing and tobacco for smoking; (3) miscellaneous items, viz., rent, local taxes, medical treatment, the purchase of boats and cattle, thorough house repairs and domestic festivals and entertainments.

Luxuries were excluded from these model or normal budgets, but betel leaf and tobacco were treated as necessities for the indigent as well as for those who are comfortably off. Domestic festivals and entertainments were included in the budgets, because in Bengal they are regarded as necessities and not luxuries. Among Hindus certain ceremonies and entertainments on the occasion of births, deaths and marriages are a religious duty, and custom lays on Muhammadans a similar obligation of entertaining. Jewellery was naturally excluded; it is the custom for the cultivator to invest his savings in jewellery for his womenfolk, and such expenditure is "less a part of his annual budget than a measure of his annual profit". It should also be explained that the cost of living is reduced by the small expenditure on fish. This is an article of diet in all families,

but the greater part is caught by the consumer himself. Still, a certain amount is bought and the expenditure on this account was entered in the budgets; the amount is small, owing to the great cheapness of fish.

The normal budgets having been prepared, the 342,000 families to which the economic survey extended were allocated to one or other of four classes, according as their circumstances showed, or approximated to, a condition of comfort or want. The four classes were:—

- (1) Families living in comfort; 49 per cent. of the population, with an annual income of Rs. 365 a family, came within this class.
- (2) Families living in a condition below comfort, but above want; this class included 28 per cent. of the population, the average income of the family being Rs. 233.
- (3) Those living in straitened circumstances, but out of the reach of actual want; this class accounted for 18½ per cent. with an average income of Rs. 166 a family.
- (4) Those whose life is spent in a struggle with want; they represented 4½ per cent. of the population and the average income of the family was Rs. 115.

A further classification was made of cultivators and non-cultivators, with the results tabulated in the statement below, which shows the annual income per head qualifying for each class and the percentage of persons in each:—

CLASS.	CULTIVATORS.		NON-CULTIVATORS.	
	Income.	Percentage.	Income.	Percentage.
	Rs.		Rs.	
In comfort ..	60	49½	80	47
Below „ ..	43	28½	42	27
Above want ..	34	18	31	20
In „ ..	27	4	24	5½

In the case of the indigent, it should be predicated that utter destitution due to want of food is unknown. A man who cannot earn enough to support himself can get food by begging, and the charity of the villagers never fails him. Destitution is apparent in absence of cattle, ramshackle huts and scanty ragged clothes, but rarely in emaciation. Those in real want are generally widows left with a young family or old persons without relatives to support them.

The above figures give broad general results and there are great diversities among different classes. The cultivators are a homogeneous class, but non-cultivators are very heterogeneous, including both wealthy and poor, rich landlords, lawyers and traders, as well as fishermen, weavers, industrial workers and general labourers, so that generalizations without reference to the different subdivisions of this class are apt to be misleading. In order, therefore, to have a proper conspectus, it is necessary to examine the case of each separately and in further detail.

The impression given by Mr. Jack is that the cultivator's life is a happy one. "Nature is bountiful to him, the soil of his little farm yields in such abundance, that he is able to meet all his desires without excessive work. He can produce the food of his own family and sufficient to purchase everything else which he requires from a few acres of land that he can cultivate unaided without overwork. . . The timetable of the cultivator, when his land is unfit for jute, shows three months' hard work and nine months' idleness; if he grows jute as well as rice, he will have an additional six weeks' work in July and August. These are not conditions of which he can reasonably complain."

CULTIVATORS.

Not all the cultivators are dependent on the cultivation of their fields for their livelihood, for there is a good deal of subsidiary employment; two-fifths of them add to their income by taking up other work, as, for instance, harvesting the rice crop. In the south and east of the district it is usual for cultivators to engage labourers to cut their own crops and go off themselves to cut crops in Bākaiganj and Mymensingh. They do this because it is a paying proposition and not because they are driven to it by want. They get their food and one-fifth of the crop which they reap, and this is so abundant, that their share of it supplies their families with rice for the year and more than makes up for the portion of their own crops which they give as wages to their hired labourers:

The rent paid for land averages only 6 per cent. of the net value of the produce; the abundance of fish and of fruit grown on the homestead lands not only gives variety to the daily food, but keeps the bill for food down. Not all the rice required for consumption is grown locally. It is estimated that two-fifths is imported. This is largely because of the extensive area under jute, the sale of which means much to the cultivators; they are most prosperous in the areas where most jute is grown and *vice versa*. Of the total value of the agricultural produce of the district rice accounts for 55 per cent. and jute for 31 per cent. "Nowadays the cultivator tends to grow jute on all the land fit for the purpose and to grow rice and other food crops only on the remainder. If that remainder is insufficient to supply the family requirements in food, he prefers to buy rather than reduce the amount of land under jute."

On the whole, wealth is equally distributed among the cultivators and their circumstances are easy, except in the north of the district, where jute is grown to a much smaller extent than in the south and trade is hampered by the lack of good communications.

NON-CUL- TIVATORS.

The non-cultivating class is preponderantly Hindu. Over one-third are *bhadralok* (described below), who are mainly landlords or engaged in professional and clerical callings; one-third consists of industrial workers, skilled and unskilled, one-fifth of traders and one-tenth of domestic and menial servants. Generally, members of this class work harder and more regularly than the cultivators, while their circumstances are not so good. Some, such as the larger landlords, are far better off, but the great majority are poorer than the mass of the cultivators, and there is a substratum of real poverty.

It is an indication of economic stress that a considerable proportion of the male members of this class leave their homes to earn money for the support of their families. These are left in the village home; the absent breadwinner remits money to them and returns home to visit them at intervals. This is the case not only among the lower classes, such as boatmen, fishermen and servants, but also and perhaps even more so among the *bhadralok*. Among them not only the father of the family, but all the sons may be away, except one, who is left alone to look after the women folk. It is, says Mr. Jack, not uncommon to find a *bhadralok* family

with ten or more adult women and many children of different degrees of kinship under the charge of a single man, who has no other business in life than their management. "These guardians have no serious occupation. Landowners also are accustomed to spend an idle life in their village homes, not only the father, but all the sons together. The result is that idle men are found in many villages who have no possible means of spending their days profitably and who not unnaturally devote themselves to intrigue or to fomenting strife between their neighbours; wherever villagers quarrel or are at loggerheads with their neighbours, there is usually some idle *bhadrālok* who acts as the *agent provocateur*. Much of the sin and crime of the villages is to be laid at their doors."

Bhadrālok is a name given to members of the three higher Hindu castes, viz., Brahmans, Kayasths and Baidyas, and Muhammadans of birth, breeding and education. Nearly half are landlords, whose income is derived, in part or in whole, from the rent of land; one-fourth belong to the professional classes, such as lawyers, doctors and priests; the remainder are clerks in public or private employ. All are educated, many are influential, and their circumstances range from affluence to grinding poverty. At one end of the scale are the landlords, who obtain over four millions of rupees a year from rentals; some are wealthy capitalists, but many are petty land-owners with narrow means. At the other end are ill-paid and penurious priests and struggling clerks, especially those working for private employers, such as landlords and traders. Their standards of living, imposed by tradition and income, are comparatively high, their income is inelastic and they feel all the disadvantages and none of the advantages of high prices.

There is also an unequal distribution of wealth among the trading class. The larger merchants and the middlemen engaged in the jute trade make large profits; the smaller traders and shopkeepers are men of moderate means or have a struggle to make ends meet.

The category of industrial workers includes not only the artisans, who nearly all work at village handicrafts, but also labourers, whether skilled or unskilled. The great majority are unskilled labourers, who are employed on roads or earth-work or work as coolies (porters) in the markets, railway stations, etc. They earn between Rs. 15 and Rs. 20 a month and as much as Rs. 30 at busy seasons. There is no clear-cut line of distinction between agricultural labourers and

Bhadrālok.

Traders.

Industrial classes.

cultivators, because the latter take up work on the fields of others as well as cultivate their own. The landless farm labourer is said to be unknown in Faridpur.

The working class generally have the same standard of living as the cultivators. This, however, cannot be said of weavers and fishermen. The weavers, who are a thrifty, hard-working class, follow a declining handicraft. The products of their hand-loom are gradually being ousted from the markets by machine-made cotton goods, and many weavers have abandoned the unequal struggle and taken to agriculture. The fishermen are a simple hardworking community, who live laborious nights as well as days, for they often fish the livelong night. Their standards of living are low, but their needs are few and they are never in want of full meals.

Incidence
of
taxation.

In the course of the economic survey a careful analysis was made of the incidence of taxation, including imperial taxes (both direct and indirect, such as land revenue, income tax, salt, customs and excise duties) and also local rates and village taxation in the form of the *chaukidāri* tax. On the basis of the figures for 1913-14 the all-round average was found to be Rs. 2-10 per head of the population or 5 per cent. only of the income *per capita*. The land revenue, owing to the Permanent Settlement, is a light impost. It represents a quarter of the landlords' receipts from the land.

The proportion of taxation derived from local rates, *i.e.*, municipal rates in municipal areas and the road and public works cess in rural areas, is small. The municipal rates amount to Rs. 1-8 per head of the population or 3 per cent. of income, but they only affect a minute fraction of the total population. The road and public works cess on the other hand affects nearly the whole agricultural population. It is assessed at the rate of one *anna* in the rupee of rent, and half is supposed to be paid by the landlord and half by the tenant. In practice the tenant pays the lion's share. It was found that in the east and north of the district landlords exacted double the legal rate as often as they collected the bare legal rate. In some estates it was never less than one *anna* in the rupee of rent and it was often two or three; in others the figure rose much higher and in one extreme case the landlords appear to have levied the cess at the rate of six *annas* in the rupee.

The *chaukidāri* tax, which amounts only to 0.3 per cent. of income, is also uneven in its incidence. Though assessed

by the leading men of the village, who are fully conversant with the circumstances of their neighbours, "it appears", says Mr. Jack, "that generally speaking the poorer classes pay double as much as the richer classes and too many of the latter escape altogether. The number of families in really good circumstances who escape too lightly or altogether was astonishing, especially among the Hindus, while on the other hand at least half the families who were found to be living in a condition very little removed from actual want were assessed to the rate".

Investigations into the extent of indebtedness showed that 55 per cent. of the cultivators are entirely free from debt and 39 per cent. have debts of amounts which do not cripple their resources. Only 6 per cent. are seriously embarrassed, to the extent that their debts are equal to a year's income or more, and a quarter of these are hopelessly involved. Of non-cultivators as many as 73 per cent. are free from debt, but their immunity is probably due not so much to affluence as to lack of credit consequent on poor resources. The number heavily involved is proportionately greater than among the cultivators, owing to the amount of credit obtained by the *bhadralok* on the strength of their social position rather than of good securities.

INDEBTED-
NESS.

The great bulk of the debts are incurred in order to pay for the expenses of domestic ceremonies, especially marriages, and entertaining large numbers of guests in connexion with them. The income of half a year, or even of a whole year, may be swallowed up by the expenses of a marriage. Other debts are chiefly on account of loans taken for the purchase of cattle or rebuilding houses. Short term loans are usual when money is taken for agricultural purposes, *e.g.*, for the purchase of seed; like other industries, agriculture has to be financed by credit. It is generally stipulated that a portion of the crop shall go to the money-lender, and such loans are promptly repaid, because the latter takes good care to get his share of the crop as soon as it is harvested. Loans of this character have been excluded from the calculations of indebtedness. Long term loans carry an exorbitant rate of interest. It is usually a multiple of twelve and a quarter, as, for instance, 24½ or 36½ or 49 per cent. per annum, and occasionally, but rarely, is as low as 18 per cent. The interest, if unpaid, is added to the principal, and a new bond is then executed showing the amalgamated sum, as if it was the original loan. A large

proportion of the debts, perhaps one-half, are the result of the accumulation of compound interest.

An attempt to deal with the problem of indebtedness by means of the co-operative movement has been made since 1906-07, when an urban bank society and 14 rural co-operative societies were established. The first to be registered were the Faridpur Co-operative Urban Bank and the Kurshi Grāmya Baitulmal and Pānchmia Grāmya Baitulmal in the Goalundo subdivision. Next year the number of urban banks rose to three and of rural societies to 37, one urban bank and 21 rural banks being started in the Mādāripur subdivision alone. At first there was difficulty in financing these societies, but funds to a limited extent were obtained from Government loans, the Shillong Pioneer Urban Society and the Tāki Urban Society.

In the Mādāripur subdivision progress was rapid, though the urban society was embarrassed up to the end of 1909 by the absence of local support, but loans from Government and large deposits from Calcutta, which were obtained through the influence of the Registrar, strengthened its position till local capital flowed in. In the Sadar subdivision also, after a preliminary shortage of money, Government loans and ample deposits soon enabled the urban bank to stand on a firm footing. In the Gopālganj subdivision the first society took the form of an urban bank to which rural societies were affiliated; opposition was overcome and in 1913 as many as 13 societies were organized and registered; and the need of a central bank for financing and supervising them began to be felt.

The year 1913 marks a new development in the progress of the movement in Faridpur, for in that year rural societies began to be financed by central banks instead of by urban limited liability societies. Central banks were established at Faridpur, Goalundo, Mādāripur and Gopālganj. The Gopālganj central bank, which started with a working capital of Rs. 73,000, experienced no difficulty until after September 1919, when the rural societies suffered from the effects of the disastrous cyclone of that month, after which again there was a succession of poor crops for three years. The Mādāripur central bank had a crisis earlier, viz., in 1915, when a sharp fall in the price of jute caused a series of defaults in repayments by rural societies. The condition of the

* I am indebted to the Registrar, Co-operative Societies, Bengal for the information embodied in this section.

latter deteriorated still further as the result of slack local management. Persistent defaults in repayments continued, and in 1919 came the disastrous cyclone. The Goālando central bank, however, has escaped the crises which those of Gopālganj and Mādāripur experienced and has made steady progress. In the Sudar subdivision a series of partial crop failures and lack of education among members in rural areas have hampered the development of rural societies. The following table gives statistics of the various societies which were in existence in the district at the end of June 1923:—

Class of societies	Number	Members	Working capital.
<i>Agricultural.</i>			Rs.
Credit	123	16,898	13,97,152
Grain	1	78	243 maunds
Irrigation .. .	1	No transaction	
<i>Non-agricultural.</i>			
Central banks .. .	5	1,087	16 30,445
Credit	10	1,763	1,20,311
Stores	5	949	22,020
Weavers	2	No transaction	
Fishermen	4	45	2,944

CHAPTER V.

PUBLIC HEALTH

HEALTHI
NESS OF
AREAS

There is a remarkable contrast between the condition of public health in the north, and more particularly the north-west, of the district and those prevailing in the south. In the former area "the drying up of the rivers and streams has made the soil less fertile, the transport of produce more difficult and the climate more unhealthy. During the cold weather the rivers become a chain of dirty pools; there are few tanks and no good drinking water. Epidemics of cholera are very frequent and other diseases take toll of the population; malaria is constant everywhere and the people generally have a very low degree of vitality. In Bāliakandi and Bhushna, and in the contiguous parts of Faridpur and Goā-lundo, a good deal of the country has relapsed into jungle. There is a very general lack of prosperity observable throughout the northern part of the district, although in the last few years some amelioration in these conditions has taken place owing to the introduction of the cultivation of jute".*

The south of the district, on the other hand, is an area of active rivers, which bring down volumes of fresh water, and overflowing their banks in the rainy season, enrich the soil with the silt left by the receding flood. It bears a teeming and prosperous population and is comparatively free from the scourge of malaria. There can be no doubt that the presence of five rivers and the periodic inundation of the land are factors of prime importance in regard to public health in this, as in other deltaic districts of Bengal.

VITAL
STATISTICS.

A study of the vital statistics of the district during the present century discloses a natural growth of population, owing to the excess of births over deaths. The excess amounted to 102,000 in 1901-11, in spite of epidemics of cholera, which in five years of the decade caused nearly 37,000 deaths, while in the ten years ending 1921 the births

outnumbered the deaths by 87,000. The birth-rate is high, averaging 40 per mille in the decade 1901-10 and reaching that figure again in 1917, but on the other hand the death-rate stands, on the average, at a high figure compared with other districts of Eastern Bengal; it averaged 35 per cent. in the decade 1901-10 and reached 36 per mille in 1920.

A new visitation in the public health annals of the district has been influenza, which appeared in epidemic form in the years 1918 and 1919. Farīdpur, however, was only slightly affected: in fact, no district in Bengal appears to have suffered less from the epidemic. The total mortality due to the disease in these two years was estimated by the Director of Public Health at between 0·3 and 0·4 per cent. of the population.

INFLUENZA
EPIDEMIC.

In Sir William Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*, published in 1875, it was stated that a dispensary existed at Padamdi in the Goālund subdivision, which had been established in 1867; and this was described as being the only medical charity in the district. There was also a dispensary, however, at Mādāripur, which was then included in the district of Bākārganj. This latter dispensary had been established in 1869, but it was already in a hopeless financial condition. Subscriptions were scanty and the Civil Surgeon had recommended that the institution should be closed until such time as the people could appreciate its benefits.

MED. CAL
RELIEF

In 1920 medical relief was given at 23 hospitals or dispensaries. The principal is the Farīdpur Sadar Hospital, which contains 27 beds and treated 23,000 outdoor patients in that year; but in regard to accommodation for indoor patients it is surpassed by the dispensary at Goālund Ghāt, which has as many as 54 beds. Indoor patients are also treated at the dispensaries situated at the subdivisional headquarters, viz., Rājbari (21 beds), Gopālganj (12 beds) and Mādāripur (8 beds). Out-patients only are treated (on the allopathic system) at the other dispensaries, which are situated at the places shown below. In addition to these a thana dispensary was opened at Farīdpur in 1923, and there is also a homoeopathic dispensary at Madhukhālī, which is maintained by the District Board:—

Bāliākāndī.
Bandarkhola.
Bāzītpur.
Bhadrāsān.

Bhānga.
Bhoira.
Boālmāri.
Chikāndī.

Damudya.	Maksūdpur.
Ghirtākāndi.	Nagarkānda.
Kālkini.	Pālang.
Korakdi.	Pāngsa.
Kotālipāra.	Sibchar.

**VACCINA-
TION.**

Vaccination is carried on under difficulties, because a large proportion of the population are Muhammadans of the Farāzi sect, who are extremely averse to vaccination. The returns of vaccination display extraordinary variations according as small-pox breaks out in epidemic form or is confined to sporadic cases in different years. For example, the number of successful vaccinations rose to 113,000 and 120,000 in the years 1911-12 and 1912-13, was 80,000 in 1913-14, and next year fell to 31,000. In the first three years there was a large mortality caused by small-pox, whereas in the last year there was no epidemic. This phenomenon is by no means peculiar to Faridpur.

CHAPTER VI.

AGRICULTURE

For general agricultural purposes the district may be regarded as consisting of two areas, one of which, viz., the southern portion, consists of low-lying country typical of Eastern Bengal and the other, viz., the northern portion, resembles the tract of a higher level found in the western districts of Nadia and Jessore. The south is bordered by great rivers and traversed by many minor waterways, the spill water from which practically submerges the country during the rainy season. This annual inundation serves a double purpose. It not only supplies the moisture necessary for the crops, more especially the important rice crop, but it renews the fertility of the soil by depositing silt, a splendid natural manure.

GENERAL
CONDI-
TIONS.

In the north of the district, on the other hand, the level of the land is comparatively high. It has been so far raised, and the rivers have silted up to such an extent, that in ordinary years there is no general distribution of river-borne silt, such as takes place in the south. There are, however, many basins or depressions in this area, the lower lands in which become inundated every year and so receive a dressing of fertilizing silt, while in years of very high floods the water spreads over high as well as low lands.

There is rainfall in most months of the year, and its distribution over the different periods of the year, combined with the annual inundation, allows crops to be grown at all seasons and prevents the district from being dependent on any single crop or on the rainfall of any one season. Altogether 80 per cent. of the total land area is under cultivation, and one-third of the cultivated area bears two or more crops in the year. For example, in the comparatively high lands in the north and centre of the district rice or jute is harvested in July or August and oilseeds, pulses, wheat or barley in February; and a similar alternation of crops is practised in recently reclaimed alluvial lands.

The proportion of land which is twice cropped varies considerably in the different subdivisions. It rises as high as 48 per cent. in Mādāripur, where *rabi* or spring crops, grown in the cold weather and reaped at its close, are cultivated to a large extent on the *chars* after the jute crop has been removed. It is 30 and 37 per cent., respectively, in the Goālundo and Sadar subdivisions, and falls to 12 per cent. in Gopālganj, where there is a large marshy area in which little or nothing but rice is grown. In the district as a whole 24 per cent. of the land under cultivation bears *rabi* or spring crops, which are grown in the cold weather and reaped in the spring, while the proportion under summer crops, reaped during the rains, is 36 per cent. and of winter crops, reaped towards the close of the year, 72 per cent. The *rabi* crops are, speaking generally, only half as valuable as the summer and winter crops. They are sown in *chars* after the jute crop has been got in and in other areas they are raised mainly as catch-crops.

The pressure on the soil is so great that little land which is fit for cultivation remains untilled. Marshes are ploughed as soon as they have silted up sufficiently to permit of cultivation, and newly formed alluvial lands the moment they become fit to bear crops. The greater part of the uncultivated area is occupied by homesteads and domestic crops, such as bamboos and thatching grass. Reeds are commonly grown on *chars* for three or four years before they are sufficiently raised for cultivation and are a profitable form of produce, for they yield as much an acre as rice in an ordinary year.

SOILS.

The soil is uniformly alluvial, but there are large differences in its texture and composition. In the north it usually consists of a very light and somewhat sandy loam, which on the bank of the Ganges sometimes merges into pure sand, and a heavy clay is found in the inland depressions. In the east of the district the land is covered to a considerable depth with a rich silt brought down by the flood waters of the Ganges and Brahmaputra. There is also a heavy silt in a strip of land a few miles broad along the river Madhumati on the west, but further away from that river, where silt-laden water does not penetrate, it gives place to a stiff loam. A layer of vegetable mould is found in marshy areas.

PRINCIPAL CROPS.

Two crops stand in a position by themselves by reason both of the area which they cover and of their economic importance. These are rice and jute, of which the former is cultivated mainly for home consumption and the

latter for export and sale. It is pointed out in the Faridpur Settlement Report that during the years which have elapsed since the revenue survey there has been a considerable change in the character of the main crops. At that time a much larger area appears to have been under *rabi* crops and oil-seeds, sugarcane was extensively cultivated, and indigo was still largely grown, though in a limited area, viz., thana Bāliākāndī and the adjoining country. Jute had only recently been introduced and was grown to a very small extent.

“ At the present day the cultivator may be said in three-quarters of the district to depend upon jute for a comfortable livelihood ”. In the marshy thanas of Gopālganj, Kotālīpāra and Maksūdpur the cultivators depend almost entirely upon the rice crop, but in the Goālundo, Mādānpur and Sadar subdivisions “ spring crops are only grown as catch-crops, where formerly much dependence was placed upon them, rice is grown for consumption, where formerly it was grown for sale, and jute is grown increasingly every year with far greater profit than was ever won from the crops which it has displaced.”

The staple crop of the district is rice, which is grown on nine-tenths of the net cropped area. It falls into three main classes, viz., *āman* or winter rice, *āus* or summer rice and *boro* or spring rice. It is, however, difficult to follow this classification in the case of rice grown in the marshes, for the dates of sowing and reaping depend on the level of the water. The cultivators themselves recognize a large number of varieties, some of which they have introduced during the last seventy years. As long ago as 1875 it was pointed out in the Statistical Account that the number of species of rice grown in the district had increased, owing to the annual exodus of cultivators to the Sundarbans and Dacca during the harvesting season, for they generally brought back with them the seeds of new varieties. Fourteen species were mentioned, which had been introduced in this way within the space of twenty years.

Aman or winter rice is the predominant crop in the south of the district. It occupies practically the whole of the cultivated area in the Gopālganj subdivision and four-fifths in Mādāripur, but the figure falls in the north, where *āus* or summer rice is largely grown. Half of the net cropped area is under *āman* in the Goālundo subdivision and two-thirds in the Sadar subdivision. It gives a heavy yield in the south, but the outturn is comparatively poor in the north, unless there is early and widespread inundation of the land.

In this district *āman* is generally sown broadcast, and transplantation is rare, except in villages on the border of the Bakārganj district.

Long-stemmed rice

A long-stemmed variety of *āman* is grown in marshy areas, where five to fifteen feet of water may accumulate during the rainy season. It has a remarkable capacity of growth, which enables it to keep pace with the rise of water; the cultivators say that it will shoot up a foot in a night; and it frequently attains a height of fifteen feet. It cannot however withstand a sudden sharp rise of water, which is liable to drown the plant or wash it away from its roots. At harvest time so much of the stalk as is above water is cut with the ear. The rest is left to rot and is afterwards burnt and ploughed into the ground when the water has subsided.

Aus rice

Aus or summer rice is practically confined to the north of the district and is grown on two-fifths of the net cropped area in the Goālundo subdivision and on nearly one-third in the Sadar subdivision. There is little cultivation of it in the other two subdivisions, except in the thanas of Sibchar and Pālang. Like *āman*, it is usually sown broadcast. It is commonly grown together with *āman* in localities where the depth of water does not exceed two feet at the beginning of the rains. The plant grows to a height of only three feet or a little more and the stalk does not grow sufficiently fast to keep pace with the rise of flood water, circumstances which preclude its cultivation in the marshy area. Harvesting takes place in July and August and the *āman* is left to mature and be reaped in the cold weather. The grain is inferior to that of *āman*, but the crop is very useful in supplying a food grain at a time when the stock of *āman* left over from the last harvest is running low.

Boro rice.

Boro or spring rice is planted in the beds of marshes and also in the lower part of *char* lands, especially in thana Pālang. Unlike *āman* and *aus*, it is regularly transplanted. The seed is sown in nurseries in October or November, transplanted in January or February and reaped about two months later. This also yields a coarse grain, which is however better than that of *aus* rice.

Jute.

The cultivation of jute in the district began after 1860, when its introduction synchronized with the decline of indigo. At first it was chiefly grown on *char* lands along the Meghna, but it gradually spread to other tracts and the crop is now common in nearly all parts of Faridpur. The only tract where it is of little importance is the Gopālganj

subdivision, except for a strip of land on the north and west. It is also not so extensively grown in the Goālundo subdivision as in the Sadar and Mādāripur subdivisions, owing to the difficulty of finding water for steeping in many localities.

The area on which this fibre is cultivated is liable to large fluctuations according to the price which it commands in the market. The operation of the law of supply and demand in this respect has been clearly illustrated by the course of events during the present century. From 1910 to 1914 the market price of jute was on the upward grade and the area under the crop increased proportionately. In this district the area recorded at the time of the settlement was 159,000 acres, but it rose to 240,000 acres in 1914, when there was a record crop in Bengal. Then came the outbreak of war, and the situation changed. Shipments to the countries at war with Great Britain stopped, the amount of shipping available for the export trade was also largely reduced, and the demand for sandbags for the trenches, great as it was, was not enough to absorb the huge crop of jute which had been harvested. Prices fell and the cultivators had to pass through a period of depression. The result was seen in the reduction of the area under jute, which in this district fell to 186,000 acres in 1915. Since the end of the war there has been a recovery and in 1919-20 the high figure of 258,000 acres was reached.

Jute can be cultivated in most localities in Farīdpur, except the marshes to the south and the low land found at the bottom of depressions to the north. It is grown on high land, where it depends on the rainfall alone for the moisture which it needs, on *diāras* or *chars* where the land always retains sufficient moisture, and in low-lying country where it stands in three or four feet of water. The rich alluvial soil of the *chars* appears to give the greatest outturn and also to produce the finest fibre. The seed is sown in April and May, and the crop is cut from July to September. The plants are then made into bundles, which are immersed in the water of some conveniently placed stream, pond or marsh. There they remain to be soaked for ten to fifteen days. Fermentation sets in, and the bark which contains the fibre becomes softened sufficiently to enable it to be separated from the pith. This process of steeping, so as to soak and soften the stems, is called retting. After being stripped from the stems the fibre is washed and hung up to dry,

There are two main varieties of jute, both of which are grown in Farīdpur. One is *Corchorus olitorius* (long-fruited jute), which is cultivated on lands high enough not to be affected by floods. Local names for jute of this kind are *tosha*, *bangi* or *bagi*, *nalbagi*, and *bara pāt*. The other is *Corchorus capsularis* (round-fruited jute), which thrives on lower levels and is more widely grown. Vernacular names for jute of this kind are *kakya bombai*, *deswāl*, *amunia*, *meghnāl*, etc. Some names given to different species of jute are derived from localities in which they are grown, e.g., *charua* and *bilān* grown in the *chars* and *bils*, respectively, *purbān* or eastern, *dakshina* or southern, *Padma pa'ra* grown along the *Padma* and *Pāngsa* after the place of that name. Other names are descriptive of the colour of the stems, such as *lāl pāt* or *nāl pāt* or reddish jute and *meghnāl* or cloudy from *megh* a cloud. A commercial name for local jute at Mādāripur is "downah," for which vernacular names are *sut pāt* and *udhap pāt*.

Cereals
and pulses.

Excluding rice, cereals and pulses are raised on a little over one-tenth of the net cropped area. They are chiefly found in the north of the district, where their cultivation is a feature of the cold weather. The most extensively grown are *khesāri* (*Lathyrus sativus*), *musurhi* (*Errum lens*) and *māsh-kalai* (*Phaseolus radiatus*). The two former are grown in the Mādāripur subdivision and Bhānga thana for export and elsewhere for local use; the last is mainly found in the north of the district. *Khesāri*, which yields an inferior pulse, is more commonly grown as a fodder than as a food crop. *Musurhi* yields a light digestible pulse, which is in demand as a food; the greater part of the *māsh-kalai* serves as fodder for cattle. Barley, wheat and gram, of which barley is by far the most widely grown, are almost confined to the Goālundo subdivision. Peas are grown in the same area; according to Sir William Hunter's *Statistical Account*, the pea which is produced is "hard, almost like duck-shot; in fact, it is sometimes actually so employed."

Oilseeds.

The oilseed crops consist of mustard (*sarisha* and *rāi*), which covers the largest area, sesamum (*til*), which is sometimes grown as a *rabi* crop, but is more often sown with *āman* rice and cut in May or June, and linseed, the produce of the common flax, which is grown for the sake of the oil obtained from its seed.

Condi-
ments and
spices.

Condiments and spices, with which the people flavour their food, are grown mainly for local consumption. The

most important is coriander (*dhania*), which is extensively cultivated in the Bhānga and Sibchar thanas.

Sugarcane, once an important crop in the north of the district, has almost disappeared there and is now mostly found in thanas Pāngsa and Mādāripur. Though the cane is usually grown on high lands which are not subject to inundation, some varieties are found in low-lying land in the Mādāripur subdivision, where three to five feet of water accumulate in the rainy season.

Sugarcane and date palms.

The place of sugarcane in the north has now been taken by date palms, from which date sugar is produced. The trees are tapped and the juice which exudes is collected, boiled and made into molasses or jaggery (*gūr*).

As already stated, indigo was once an important crop, but has long disappeared in the district, the land on which it was cultivated having been used for rice or jute. Safflower was also formerly grown to a considerable extent for the sake of the dye obtained from the dried petals of its flowers, but, as elsewhere, its cultivation has diminished, owing to the competition of aniline dyes. The plant is now grown to a small extent for the sake of the oil extracted from its seed.

Dyes.

Tobacco of an inferior kind is grown in small patches near the homesteads for local consumption only.

Tobacco.

Plantations of *pān* or betel leaf are scattered over different parts of the district and are specially noticeable along the banks of the river Ariāl Khān in the Mādāripur subdivision, where there is an old colony of Barais, the functional caste of betel-leaf growers in Bengal. Onions are a profitable market-garden crop. Thatching grass thrives on high lands and is also valuable. Other grasses are grown in the *chars* partly for fodder and partly to facilitate the deposit of silt and so raise their level. Reeds in the marshes and *chars*, more especially in thanas Kotālipāra and Pālang, serve a useful purpose, as they are woven into mats.

Miscellaneous crops.

The indigenous breed of cattle is of a poor quality and very little has been done to improve it, though some of the richer agriculturists occasionally introduce better animals from Bhāgalpur. Bullocks are imported annually in large numbers, but imported cattle deteriorate rapidly. Conditions in the marshes are particularly ill adapted for maintaining cattle. In the rains, when the country is submerged by flood water, the cattle have to be kept in the homesteads, where their owners feed them on marsh grasses and any

CATTLE.

fodder which they may have stored during the dry season. They often have to remain standing in water for days together; the supply of food is scanty; and by the end of the rains they are reduced to a miserable condition. Buffaloes are found mostly in the Pāngsa thana, where males are used for drawing carts, and in thanas Gopālganj and Maksūdpur, where cow buffaloes are kept for their milk.

AGRICUL-
TURAL
& EXHIBI-
TION.

An agricultural exhibition is held annually, in January or February, at the town of Faridpur, and prizes are given for agricultural produce, implements and cattle and also for the exhibits of weavers and other persons following handicrafts.

WORK OF
THE
AGRICUL-
TURAL
DEPART-
MENT.

Useful work has been done by the Agricultural Department in introducing improved varieties of rice and jute, the two main crops of Faridpur. Extensive surveys have been made in order to find types giving heavy yields and suitable for different conditions. As a result of patient investigation a pure race of *āman* rice, called *indrāsāl*, and another of *āus*, called *kataktāra*, have been widely distributed; they are appreciated by the cultivators, who realize that they produce far more than old local varieties.

As regards jute, the investigations of the Government Fibre Expert have resulted in the production of pure improved races, which are capable of yielding, on the average, three to five maunds of fibre per acre more than ordinary local races. First, a species of *Corchorus capsularis* suitable for low lands, which was given the name of *Kakya bombai*, was discovered and then a strain, or derivative from it, called R. 85. Both are late flowering and withstand drought in the early stages of growth and water-logging later on; and it has been proved by numerous tests that they yield at least three maunds of fibre more to the acre than local jute. A variety of *Corchorus olitorius* suitable for land at a higher level has also been evolved, to which the name of Chinsura Green has been given. It has an exceptional yielding capacity and also produces a better fibre than local varieties.

A demonstration and seed farm has been started at Faridpur for the dual purpose of adjusting the results of scientific investigations at the central research stations of the Department to local conditions and of taking up the study of purely local problems.

CHAPTER VII.

NATURAL CALAMITIES

The population being almost entirely agricultural, the outturn of the crops is a matter of vital concern; and fortunately, owing to a combination of circumstances, the cultivators are insured against any general failure of them. In the first place, they are not dependent, except in the marsh area, on any single crop. About one-third of the total cropped area bears two or more crops in the year, and the crops are distributed between different seasons in such a way as to make the people independent of the vicissitudes of the weather of any particular season. As stated in the previous chapter, summer crops, which are harvested about August, cover 36 per cent of the cultivated area, winter crops, which are harvested towards the end of the year, occupy 72 per cent. and spring crops, grown in the cold weather and reaped at the end of it, 24 per cent. It follows therefore that the outturn of produce is not determined by the rainfall of any one season.

LIABILITY
TO
FAMINE.

Another factor of immense importance is that the growth of the crops does not depend solely on the rainfall. Rain is indeed necessary at certain times—in February for ripening the cold weather crops, in March for sowing the rice crop, and in September for bringing that crop to maturity, but the main work is done by the floods from the great rivers, which not only provide moisture, but also fertilize the soil. These rivers, moreover, do not obtain their supply of water from any local sources. They bring down the flood water of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, which, as is well known, drain a vast area. Artificial irrigation is, therefore, unnecessary, and the district is regarded as immune from famine due to any lack of moisture. Scarcity there is sometimes, but it is confined to local limits. In recent years, for instance, there were local crop failures in 1896 and 1906, but in both years distress was alleviated by the small extent to which the district is dependent on the outturn of a single crop or the harvest of a single season.

FLOODS.

The agricultural prosperity of the district depends on floods more than on local rainfall. As explained in Chapter I, the water of the deltaic rivers is heavily charged with silt, the deposit of which raises their beds, so that they tend to overflow their banks during the rainy season, when flood water comes down their channels. The silt of the overflow is deposited to a great extent on or near the banks, which are consequently raised like the river beds. The slope of the country is therefore away from the rivers, between which there are a number of natural basins. The Ganges, here called the Padma, no longer receives tributaries, but discharges its water through distributaries. The water spreads over the land in a turgid volume during the rains, and the silt which is left behind is a rich top-dressing for the soil. The floods of the Ganges and Brahmaputra area, as a rule, not synchronous. That of the latter river comes first, in the month of July and is usually spent before that of the Ganges comes down, but if the Brahmaputra flood is late and that of the Ganges early, they coincide and cause an inundation, which is sufficiently high to reach the high lands in the north of the district. Otherwise, however, this part of the district, in which the rivers have already done their work of raising the land, is beyond the reach of inundations.

Much naturally depends on the height and duration of the floods. If they are low, which is rarely the case, they do not spread over high lands. If, they are of excessive height and duration, they may damage the crops in the low lands. On the other hand, though a low flood deprives lands at a higher level of beneficial moisture and of the deposit of silt which renews the soil, the crops in the low lands are not endangered. In any case only a partial failure of crops is possible either in the high or low land according to the character of the inundation, and there is a balance of compensating advantages. The real danger lies in the rapidity of the rise and fall of the flood. Too rapid a rise of water drowns the rice or jute, while too rapid a fall causes the rice plants to wither.

It has been pointed out that formerly very high floods caused wide-spread destruction, as, for instance in the years 1787, 1824 and 1838, when crops, cattle and riverside villages were utterly destroyed, whereas this is no longer the case. Thus, in 1871 the crops were generally saved, while very little damage was done to them by the record floods of 1907, when the Ganges and Brahmaputra were in flood at the

same time and the flood water swept over most of the district. It has been suggested as an explanation of this phenomenon that the level of the land has risen, thus minimizing the evil effect of high floods. At any rate, it seems certain that the annual inundation nowadays is beneficial rather than destructive.

Destruction is, however, caused to reverse lands by the oscillations of the rivers. They are liable to be swept away altogether, so that cultivation on them is precarious. On the other hand, the cultivator is equally liable to be presented with a gift of new land by accretion, and for many years past the tendency has been for erosion to take place on the left banks of the Padma and Meghna, and for alluvion to be active on the Faridpur side of those great waterways.

The destructive work of the river Padma has, however, proved a constant difficulty to the railway at Goālando, the terminus of the Eastern Bengal railway south of the Ganges and the place of embarkation for steamers proceeding to Eastern Bengal. Situated as it is near the junction of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, the terminus has to be moved as the river advances or recedes. The terminus was first placed exactly at the junction of the two rivers and a large sum was spent on protecting the site from erosion, but in 1875 the protective works, the station, and the Magistrate's court, were washed away. A new terminus had to be built two miles away from the former bank of the river, and since then there have been frequent changes. Indeed, about twelve years ago the river had so far changed its course, that it seemed not unlikely that the Faridpur railway station would take the place of Goālando as the terminus.

While the people of Faridpur are saved the lingering anxiety of fears of famine from a failure of the monsoon rainfall, as well as the protracted sufferings of scarcity or famine, such as cultivators elsewhere have to undergo, they are liable to misfortunes, sudden and terrible, caused by destructive cyclones. Many such cyclones have swept through different parts of the district, leaving death and destruction in their trail. It is not necessary, however, to describe more than two, which are of recent occurrence.

The first, which occurred on 1st November 1912, was peculiar, on account of its extremely narrow track. Coming up from the Khulna district and passing through the thanas of Gopālganj and Maksūdpur, it struck the town of Faridpur shortly before midday. It passed through the civil station,

Cyclone
of 1912.

but did not touch the bazar, and moving in a northerly direction crossed the river Padma and passed into the Dacca district. No serious damage was done, except within a space about three hundred yards wide. Here, however, its fury and force were extraordinary, but its duration was fortunately extremely short, for it lasted scarcely more than a minute. Corrugated iron roofs were lifted bodily with their joists and scantlings and carried considerable distances. Pieces 20 feet square were carried 150 yards; one cleared the Civil Surgeon's house and the jail wall, 18 feet high, and was deposited in the jail tank. Others were carried across the Maidān, some to be stopped by the big trees in front of the Judge's court, while some, after making great gashes in the turf, were broken and the pieces carried on for a further quarter of a mile. Another curious feature of this cyclone is that though the settlement offices were unroofed and three of the staff killed and about forty injured, of whom one died as a result of his injuries, some of the mat walls remained more or less in position and that, though some of the papers were swept away, the majority were not removed by the storm.

Cyclone
of 1919.

The second cyclone occurred on the 24th September 1919 and lasted on into the night of that day. It developed in the Bay of Bengal and struck the coast of the Sundarbans in the morning. Sweeping through the district of Khulna and part of Jessore and Bākarganj, it passed through the greater part of the Farīdpur and Dacca districts. Then, with a diminishing force, it passed over parts of the districts of Tippera and Mymensingh and ultimately dissipated itself in the Khāsia Hills in Assam. It was like an intensely violent whirlwind, about 25 miles in diameter, moving at the rate of about twelve miles an hour and was remarkable for its small dimensions and great intensity. An enormous amount of damage was done by it in the areas which it visited. It levelled houses and trees in its path, and many deaths were caused by drowning or by falling trees and buildings. The number of human lives lost in the different districts which it visited was estimated at over 3,000 and of cattle 40,000. All communications, by river, rail and road, telegraphic and postal, were for a time disorganized; and immense damage was done to river craft, buildings and trees. The effects were, however, temporary, and by the end of the year a good harvest restored the affected area to a fair degree of prosperity. This consummation was accelerated by the relief operations undertaken by Government,

which imported Burma rice for gratuitous relief and for sale at a cheap rate, distributed cloth gratis, and also gave loans without security and without interest, in order to provide relief to sufferers of the middle classes without prejudice to their self-respect.

CHAPTER VIII.

INDUSTRIES, LABOUR AND TRADE

INDUS-
TRIES.

According to the census of 1921, altogether 161,000 persons or 7 per cent. of the population are dependent on industries of different kinds for their livelihood. The great majority of the local industries are handicrafts or cottage industries, which supply the villagers with their simple needs. Agriculture almost monopolizes the energies of the people of Faridpur; little is manufactured for export; and with the exception of jute pressing there is scarcely an organized industry. The industrial census held in connexion with the general census of 1921, within the scope of which came all industrial concerns employing 10 persons or more, showed that there were 25 concerns which possessed this low qualification, and the aggregate labour force employed in them aggregated not more than 592 persons. Twenty were jute presses, in which 406 persons were at work; two with 147 employes were engaged in brick and tile making, and the other three employed between them only 39 persons.

Jute
presses.*

The industry of pressing jute into bales is more important than the figures given above would appear to indicate. They should be taken in combination with the results of the general census of occupations in which 4,838 workers were returned as earning their living by the pressing of jute. The explanation of the difference is that the industrial census was taken at a time when the jute trade was slack. The number of jute presses and of men finding employment in them is many times greater during the busy season, i.e., August to September. Inquiries made in 1921-22 showed that there were 47 concerns engaged in jute pressing, the average number of labourers in which varied from 20 to 291. Mādāripur is the centre of the industry; it contains the presses of L. R. Rodrique, A. H. Stansbury, W. N. B. Catteth and Monmohan Ganguli. The principal presses in other places

* I am indebted to the Director of Industries, Bengal, for a note on this and other industries of the district.

are those of the Union Jute Company at Kāmārkhālī, Landale and Clark, Ltd., at Charmuguriah and R. M. Shah at Sibchar. The process consists of pressing raw jute into bales so as to reduce the bulk of the fibre and compress it into bales of a manageable size for export to Calcutta. The bales are known as *kutchā* bales, the jute being subjected to no very great pressure.

The manufacture of safety matches is an industry which has recently been introduced. Four factories have been started by Messrs Dās and Son at Pālang, by the Eastern Cotton Industries and Bank, Ltd., at Mādāripur, by Babu Gopāl Chandra Mukharji at Bilāskhān and by the Bangia Nirapada Match Factory at Farīdpur.

Match
manufac-
ture.

The weaving of cotton cloth on hand-looms is an old indigenous industry, which in Farīdpur has survived the competition of foreign and Indian mills, and is still the most important local cottage industry. It is, however, decaying. Twenty years ago it supported 53,000 persons, and the number is now reduced to 34,000; the number of workers actually engaged in weaving is a little over 9,000. Many of the weavers, especially those who are Hindus, have taken to cultivation as a more profitable occupation, and the majority of the weavers are Muhammadans. A special inquiry held in connexion with the census of 1921 showed that there were in all 7,962 hand-looms in the district, representing 3,539 per million inhabitants and 136 per square mile. The proportion of looms equipped with fly-shuttles is as high as 75 per cent.—a ratio exceeded in only three districts in Bengal, viz., Jessore, Khulna and the 24-Parganas.

Cotton
weaving.

The weavers who are found in almost every important village generally produce the coarser varieties of *dhutīs*, *sāris*, *lungīs* and *gāmchas*, for which there is a fairly good local demand. Bed-sheets of fine quality, and checked and striped fabrics suitable for coats and shirts, are made in large quantities at Rājbarī, the headquarters of the Goālundō subdivision, the yarn being obtained from the *hāt* or market held at Kumārkhālī in the Nadia district. The coarse cloths are made for local use, and the cotton check called *chārkāna* finds a sale in Calcutta.

Fifty years ago it was stated, in Sir William Hunter's *Statistical Account of Bengal*, that the most important manufacture of Farīdpur, and indeed the staple article of district trade, was sugar prepared both from the juice of the date tree and from sugarcane. This is no longer the case, but

Sugar and
molasses.

the manufacture of *gūr* or molasses from date-palm and sugarcane juice is still carried on rather extensively in the villages of Habaspur, Mirgi and Kālimohar in the Goāundo subdivision and at Gobindapur, Khoājpur, Bhotnāj, Kālkini, Mātābhānga, Binodpur and Kārtikpur in the Mādāripur subdivision. Sugar is also produced by the simple indigenous method at Sonākandar and Lakhikhola in the Rājbari thana. A small factory has been started at Rājbari.

**Jute
weaving.**

The spinning and weaving of jute and the manufacture of string and gunny bags are carried on to a small extent in the villages of Kashalia, Gunadar and Bayaikhola in Kotālipāra thana and at Durgābari and Kamālpur in the Rājair and Kālkini police-stations, respectively. It is scarcely a regular industry, and the work is done chiefly by members of the Kupāli caste.

**Mat and
basket
weaving.**

The manufacture of mats is of some importance. The Namasudras make mats from bamboos, canes and reeds, and a fine variety is made of *sitalpāti* (*Phrynium dichotomum*) in the Bhushna thana in the Sadar subdivision; the local *sitalpāti* mats, which are said to be not so fine as those of Sylhet, are extensively used. Various cane articles, such as tiffin baskets, chairs and teapoys, are manufactured at Saursha in the Pāngsa thana and at Orkandi and Mātla-khāli in the Bāliakāndi thana, but the outturn is small.

**Bricks
and tiles.**

Tiles, similar in pattern to those produced by Messrs. Burn & Co. at Rāniganj, are manufactured at Domesbar in the Mādāripur subdivision, and there is also a brick factory at Mādāripur.

**Brass-
work.**

Brass utensils are made in the villages of Bilāskhar, Dasaratha, Kātilbāri and Boghira in the Pālang thana, where sixty to seventy families are engaged in this industry; the raw material consists of imported sheets.

Fishing.

Fishing supports 47,000 persons, a figure which includes those returned as fish vendors as well as those who catch fish. The majority both catch and sell fish, and may be returned under either head, so that it is impossible to distinguish vendors of fish from actual fishermen. The number of those who are engaged in fishing, apart from the families supported by them, is 15,000. The number is not to be wondered at considering the nature of the district with its many rivers and *bils* and the fact that fish is the only kind of meat in which so many of its inhabitants indulge. On the other hand, it is large when it is considered

to what an extent the people catch fish for themselves and obtain their daily supply by their own exertions.

A few years ago two fishery companies were started in the district. One, called the Mādāripur Fishery and Trading Company, Limited, is purely a fishermen's concern. The manager belongs to a caste of fishermen, and almost all the directors and 90 per cent. of the shareholders are *bonâ fide* fishermen; the object of the promoters is to improve the social and economic condition of the fishermen of the district.

At the Baptist Mission Industrial School at Farīdpur carpentry, polishing, cane and ironwork are carried on with the use of machinery and up-to-date methods. Blacksmiths, who are found in every *hāt* and bazar, turn out the common household and agricultural implements, such as ploughshares, sickles, *koḍālis*, *daṛs*, etc. Earthenware for domestic use and clay toys are made in most parts of the district by village potters.

Other industries.

Labour is mostly required for agricultural purposes, as is only to be expected in a district, with no important indigenous industries, in which the great mass of the people are agriculturists. The use of hired labour has extended with the cultivation of jute, the price of which enable cultivators to employ others to do work, mainly weeding, which they used to do themselves. The labourers engaged for this purpose are mostly local, but some are brought in from neighbouring districts. Both in the north of the district and in the *biḷ* area the cultivators themselves for the most part do all that is required for the crops, and hired labour is very little used: such as is needed is obtained locally. On the *chars*, however, labour is imported from Nadia, chiefly from the Kushtia subdivision, the cultivators finding that it pays them to go off themselves to Bākarganj and Mymensingh to cut the crops there, for their earnings are sufficient to pay their own labourers and leave a balance. Non-agricultural labourers get good wages and can earn Rs. 15 to Rs. 20 a month as coolies and even Rs. 30 a month in busy seasons.

LABOUR.

The great bulk of the district trade is in agricultural produce, such as rice and jute, and articles of every-day use. The trade in agricultural produce is a collecting trade and is in the hands of dealers who buy up rice, jute, etc., and forward them to Calcutta or take them to the local towns. For the disposal of other products and the supply of ordinary

TRADE.

needs the cultivators and village artisans go to the rural markets called *hâts*, where they make their sales and obtain their requirements. An admirable description of the *hâts* is given by Mr. W. H. Thompson in the Bengal Census Report of 1921.

Rural
markets
(*hâts*).

“ The great mass of the cultivators ”, he writes, “ have few needs which their land does not supply, and those needs very simple ones. There is little opportunity for the development of the distributing trades, which in all parts of the world find employment for a much greater number than do the collecting trades. In rural Bengal shops are practically non-existent. One may go miles along main roads through some of the most thickly populated parts of the country and see none. But *hât khola* (market places) are more frequently met with. Commonly there are two market days in the week and on the other days the place is deserted, though an important *hât* may have a permanent shop or two.

“ *Hâts* are scattered so profusely over the country that a cultivator in almost any district can go to one every day of the week without going more than five or six miles from home. As often as not he does not go for business. When his crops are on the ground, besides petty repairs to his homestead and the care of his cattle, which he generally leaves to his children, he has nothing to do. He has his meal about mid-day or a little before, smokes a pipe, has a short sleep, and about three o'clock in the afternoon sets out to whichever *hât* in the neighbourhood happens to be meeting. He may take with him a fine pumpkin he has grown and would like his neighbours to see, and he may bring home a bottle of kerosine oil, but he goes mainly to meet his friends, hear the talk of the neighbourhood and find out the price of various commodities, because such are the things that interest him. If he does buy anything, he delights to inquire the price from several dealers and haggle over it before he buys, for time is no object to him. In fact, the *hât* is as much a place of recreation as a place of trade. . . Where there are daily bazars, they commonly have two days in the week which are *hât* *days, on which the bazar is much better attended than on other days.”

There are altogether 358 *hâts* in the district, of which 106 have daily bazars; translated into terms of area, there are seven *hâts* or markets for every square mile. As Mr. Thompson remarks: “ The existence of so many markets so well attended means that the supply of commodities which

are produced on the land, and change hands between one cultivator and another, is kept very much in the hands of the cultivating classes themselves. They employ no *entrepreneur*, and in this fact lies the explanation of the small proportion of the population occupied in trade in Bengal compared, for instance, with the proportion in European countries."

A large volume of trade passes through Goālundo, the terminus of the Eastern Bengal Railway south of the Ganges and the place at which it has connexion with several steamer services. Mādāripur, situated on the Mādāripur Bil route, which provides communication by water between Calcutta and the eastern districts, is a centre of the jute collecting trade and is rising in importance. Other principal trade centres are Farīdpur, Pāngsa, Belgāchi, Rājbari and Pāchuria on the Eastern Bengal Railway, Sadarpur on the Bhubaneswar river, Jamālpur, Madhukhāli, and Kāmārkhāli on the river Chāndna, Kashaipur, Jaynagar and Bhānga on the Kumār river, Gopālganj, Bhātiapara and Pāthāti on the Madhumati, Pālang on the river of the same name, Saiyidpur and Boālmāri on the Jessore road, and the inland village of Mulfatganj. Trade centres.

The chief markets in which jute is sold are Barhamganj, Bhānga, Bhojeswar, Damudya, Gangānagar, Gohāla, Gopālganj, Kajurtala, Mādāripur, Mātbarer Hāt and Tālma. It is generally sold by the cultivators to itinerant dealers called *bepāris*, who collect it at the local *hāts* or go in boats from village to village to buy it up. Some jute firms however, buy through their own agents and not from dealers, and incidentally make extensive inquiries about the area sown with jute and the prospects of the crop. The small dealers are usually outsiders, mostly Hindus from Dacca and Chāndpur, but the *bhadrālok* of Pālang also engage in the business. Sales are spread over a considerable period, beginning in July and lasting till April next year, but the greater part of the crop is sold before October. Jute and rice-trade.

The principal rice markets are Goālundo in the north of the district and Tālma and Nilakhi in the centre. Markets are more numerous in the south. There Mādāripur, Damudya, Haturia and Pānch-Char are centres for the sale of rice grown in the *chars* and Gopālganj and Gohāla for that grown in the *bil* area.

CHAPTER IX.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.

GENERAL
CONDI-
TIONS.

In the greater part of the district the waterways serve as roads. During the rains most of the country is under a sheet of water, in some places shallow and in others deep, and the majority of the villages are accessible by water, and many by water alone. In particular the south-eastern portion of the district is intersected by so many creeks and channels that they are natural thoroughfares, while the south-west has so many marshes and sheets of water that boats are necessarily a universal means of transport and travel. In the interior of the north of the district, however, more particularly in the north-western corner, the rivers have so deteriorated owing to the silting up of their beds that none of them are now navigable except the Kumār and Chāndna, and communication by water is practically impossible except in flood seasons. The deficiency has not yet been made good by roads, which are few in number, and cart traffic is impeded by the absence of bridges on such as do exist.

The contrast between the north-west and south-west of the district in this respect has been described in Mr. Jack's *Economic Life of a Bengal District*: "In the north-west so few roads exist that during the season when the rivers have dried up the transport of produce is almost impossible, which has all the more depressing an effect upon general trade since it is at this period of the year that the reaping of the main harvest has put money freely into the hands of the population. . . . In the south-west all trade is carried by water, as the rivers and streams are very numerous and serve every village throughout the year. If a traveller walks through the northern part of the district in January or February and on to the south-west, he cannot fail to be struck by the contrast between the two. The one region shows no visible signs of prosperity and appears to be completely stagnant, the other is full of movement, the markets are crowded and ply a thriving trade, the rivers and streams are full of boats at all hours of the day and the people generally show every sign of alertness and prosperity "

Bullock carts, so far as rural areas are concerned, are confined to the north of the district, where there is one for every thousand inhabitants. Pack ponies are also used in the drier parts of the district; they are specially useful for transporting rice, as the crop is harvested and taken to market at a time when communication by water is restricted. Even in the north of the district boats are far more in use than carts for transit and transport. There are two boats per cent. of the population in the Goālundo and three per cent. in the Sadar subdivision. The ratio rises as one proceeds south, being 4 per cent. in Mādāripur and 8 per cent. in the Gopālganj subdivision. Most of them are the small open boats called *dinghis*; larger covered boats are numerous in the south and south-west. The steamer and railway services are described later.

MEANS OF
TRANS-
PORT.

The district is well served by steamers, which ply along the great boundary rivers, the Padma, Meghna and Madhumati, and also along some of the interior rivers. On the Padma there is a daily passenger steamer service between Goālundo and Nārāyanganj in the Dacca district and between Goālundo and Chāndpur on the Assam-Bengal Railway in the Tippera district; the steamers put in, among other places, at Tepakhola, Tarpasa (a junction for the steamer line to Mādāripur) and Sureswar. Goālundo is a centre of steamer traffic, for it is situated near the junction of the Ganges and Brahmaputra and commands the upper reaches of both rivers as well as the lower reaches formed by their combined stream. It is also the northern terminus of the line of the Eastern Bengal Railway running to Calcutta and is consequently the station for the transshipment of passengers and goods from the railway to the river steamers.

STEAMER
SERVICES.

Mādāripur is another centre of growing importance as it is situated on several steamer routes. There is one service connecting it with Barisāl which has stations, among other places, at Charmaguria, Khajurtala and Gaurnadi; at Nandi Bazar connexion is had with the Khulna-Nārāyanganj mail steamers. A second passing down the Mādāripur Bil route, takes passengers to Gopālganj and Khulna via Sindhia Ghat and Rājair. A third goes to Tarpasa on the Goālundo-Nārāyanganj route and has stations at the places shown below:—

Mādāripur	Berachikāndi
Khoāspur	Pālang
Nilkāndi	Gangānagar

Domeshtar
Kotapāra

Japsa
Naria
Tarpasa

Steamer traffic along the river Madhumati connects the west of the district with Bākarganj and Khulna on the south and with Nadia on the north. A steamer service along this river plies from Bōalmāri to Kushtia in the Nadia district on the north and to Khulna on the south via Mānikdah (where there is connexion with the Mādāripur steamers), Bhātāghāt and Gopālganj.

**MADARI-
PUR *Bil*
ROUTE.**

The Mādāripur *Bil* route is a name given to a channel connecting the Kumār river at Mādāripur with the Madhumati river. A large depression known as the Mādāripur *Bil* lies between those rivers, which is nearly dry for a large part of the year but in the rains furnishes a passage between this district (as also other districts of Eastern Bengal) and Khulna, from which communication may be had with Calcutta either by means of the railway or the route through the Sundarbans. The route shortens the journey between Mādāripur and Khulna by 89 miles and forms part of the system of waterways, some natural and others artificial channels which connect Calcutta with Eastern Bengal.

Its construction was begun in 1900, the channel being deepened and widened so as to allow steamers and flats drawing six feet of water to pass along it during the rains. Subsequently it was further improved by means of dredging so as to provide a safe and direct route throughout the year. The capital outlay up to the end of 1921-22 was sixty lakhs of rupees. The length of the channel is 38 miles, and the tonnage of the vessels using it averages nearly one million tons a year, the estimated value of their cargoes being Rs. 29,25,00,000—figures which are sufficient to show the magnitude and value of the traffic along this route.

RAILWAYS.

The district is connected with Calcutta by a line of the Eastern Bengal Railway, which enters it at Māchpāra, 127 miles from Calcutta, and crosses the north-western corner to Goālundo. From Pāchuria a branch line runs parallel to the Ganges to the town of Farīdpur. The total length of railway in the district is 45 miles, viz., 28 miles from Māchpāra to Goālundo and 17 miles from Pāchuria to Farīdpur. The

statement below gives the names of the railway stations in the district and the distances between them :—

Station.	Miles from last station.	Station.	Miles from last station.
Māchpāra	Pāchuria
Pāngsa ..	4	Khānkhānapur ..	4
Kalukhāli ..	4	Basantapur ..	3
Belgāchi ..	4	Sivarāmpur ..	2
Surjanagar ..	3	Farīdpur ..	8
Rājbarī ..	3		
Dadsi ..	2		
Pāchuria ..	4		
Goālundo ..	4		

Goālundo Ghāt is a moveable station, *i.e.*, its site has to be moved according as the river Padma cuts away its bank or recedes, for it is the place of embarkation for the river steamers and must be located as a spot where they can put in. Of late years too the river advanced so close to the town at Farīdpur that at one time it seemed quite possible that the station there would either be washed away or become the place of embarkation for river steamers and consequently the terminus of the line to Calcutta in place of Goālundo.

Communications by road are of comparatively little importance. The total length of the roads in existence in 1922-23 was 353 miles, of which only six miles were metalled. There are also many rough tracks called village roads, which have an aggregate length of 307 miles. The most important roads radiate from Farīdpur and are (1) the Jessore road from Farīdpur to the Jessore boundary via Chāndpur and Boālmāri (21 miles); (2) the Pāngsa road from Farīdpur to Pāngsa via Bāliākāndi (29½ miles); (3) the Rājbarī road from Farīdpur to Rājbarī (18½ miles); (4) the Bhānga road from Farīdpur to Bhānga (20½ miles); and (5) the Tālma road from Farīdpur to Tālma (8 miles).

The district contains 131 post offices, of which nineteen (shown in the following statement) are combined post and telegraph offices :—

Barhamganj.	Gopālganj.	Kotālīpara.
Bhānga.	Gosairhāt.	Lonesingh.
Bhadarganj.	Kaneswar.	Mādāripur.
Charnaguria.	Kasiāni.	Pāchuria.
Farīdpur.	Khālia.	Pālang.
Goālundo.	Khānkhānapur.	Pāngsa.
		Rājbarī.

POST AND
TELEGRAPH.

CHAPTER X.

LAND REVENUE ADMINISTRATION.

SURVEYS
AND
SETTLE-
MENTS.
Revenue
survey.

The first detailed survey of the area now included in the district was the revenue survey, which was carried out between 1850 and 1860. The dimensions of the district at that time were very different from what they are at present. Large portions belonged to surrounding districts and were surveyed with them. In the north 210 square miles square were surveyed with Pābna between 1850 and 1855 and a small area of a few square miles with Jessore in 1856-57. The district of Faridpur as then constituted—its area was only 1,312 square miles—was next surveyed in 1858-59. In 1859-60 the survey was extended to 432 square miles in the south, which formed part of the district of Bākarganj, and to 395 square miles (Sibchar and the adjacent country), which were still included in the Dacca district.

The *thākbast* survey preceded the revenue survey by a year and was confined to the demarcation of estates and villages. The object of the revenue survey was to secure a scientific survey of the village boundaries, to account for every acre of land and to obtain maps showing the geographical and topographical features of the country. It was till recently the only authoritative survey and was the basis of all topographical maps, but it has now been replaced by the survey undertaken with the settlement described below.

Dvāra
survey.

A *diāra* survey was carried out in accordance with Act IX of 1847, which laid down that in districts of which a revenue survey had been made Government might, after ten years had elapsed from the date on which that survey was approved, have a new survey made of lands on the banks of the rivers in order to ascertain the extent of the changes which had taken place since the date of the survey. These changes are great owing to the oscillations of the rivers which wash away land from one side while an accession of land takes place on the other. After it had been ascertained

which estates had lost land and which had received accretions, proprietors whose estates had suffered diluvion were allowed abatements of land revenue corresponding to the extent of their losses, and those who had gained land were assessed to a land revenue in proportion to their gains. A partial survey was made in the Ganges to the north of the district in 1869, and a comprehensive survey extending to the Ganges, Brahmaputra, Meghna and Ariāl Khān was carried out by Babu Parbati Charan Ray, Deputy Collector, in 1877-80.

The last great survey and settlement were carried out between 1904 and 1914 under the provisions of Chapter X of the Bengal Tenancy Act for the benefit of landlords and tenants, as well as of the general administration. The survey consisted of two parts viz., (1) a traverse survey, *i.e.*, the preparation by a scientific survey of plots, on the scale of 16 inches to the mile, roughly corresponding with the exterior boundaries of the villages, and (2) a cadastral survey or delineation of each separate field within the village on the traverse plot. A record of rights was then prepared between 1906 and 1910, final publication of which was completed in 1914. This was an authoritative record of the size of each cultivator's holding, the amount of his rent and the conditions of his tenure. After investigations lasting three years, a map was printed of every village and a copy given to each landlord and tenant, while a paper was printed and similarly distributed describing the fields in each tenant's holding and the conditions under which they were held.

Survey
and
settlement
of 1904-14.

The system of land tenures varies greatly in different parts of the district. As explained in the Settlement Report, "speaking generally, the north is a country of large estates, village landlords, minute holdings and much rent in kind. The west is a country of large holdings at low rents managed directly by large owners of ancient estates. The centre is a country of petty zamīndāris, petty *tāluka*s and petty revenue-free properties, the cultivators being generally connected for a long time with the owners of the land. The south-east is in its older parts a country of small *tāluka*s with very scattered lands, numerous intermediate tenures, aliquot grouping of landlords, rising rents amongst cultivators; and in its new *chars* a country for the strong man armed, in which all titles are uncertain and litigation is perpetual, of rioting landlords and land-grabbing middlemen, of turbulent

SYSTEM
OF LAND
TENURES

and independent cultivators, who hold large areas at low rents which they rarely pay ”

An extensive tract in the south was till 1873 part of Bākarganj, and the system of subinfeudation is of the same character, though it has not proceeded to the same extreme lengths, as in that district. Intermediate tenures, called *hāola* or *tāluk*, were extensively given for the reclamation of jungle or waste, usually to the relatives or friends of landlords, who in their turn created subordinate tenures. There are on an average 71 tenures to the square mile in the south of the district, and one in every four represents a share of the original lease. In contrast to this, there are few intermediate tenures in the north and west where large zamīndāris predominate; they are mostly derived from leases given to smaller landlords for the purpose of reclamation, which are called *jot* in the north and *gāti* in the west. In the central portion of the district again the marshes in the inland thanas of Nagarkānda and Maksūd-pur were brought under cultivation by Hindu *bhadrālok* settlers from Jessore and by their tenants and servants. In this part of the district estates in areas which have not been subject to diluviation are very small; in new alluvial formations, such as *chars*, the cultivators usually deal direct with proprietors and there are no intermediate tenures.

When the revenue roll of Farīdpur was first opened in 1856, it contained only 1,000 estates, and it has increased gradually by transfers from other districts, but there are still many estates in the district which are borne on the revenue rolls of other districts. At the time of the settlement it was found that of the total number of estates having land in Farīdpur 741 had land in other districts, of which 230 were borne on the revenue roll of Farīdpur and 511 on those of other districts; Dacca had 265, Jessore 118 and Bākarganj 78. This is a source of administrative difficulty, as inquiries, assessments, etc., have to be carried out in areas not under the jurisdiction of the local officers. In the cess revaluation, for instance, which was made by the Settlement Officer 18 per cent. of the district could not be revalued because the greater part of the estate concerned was in another district and borne on its revenue roll, with a resultant loss of income to the District Board. Anomalies such as this that led the Settlement Officer to remark that so far as land revenue was concerned the Collector's power extended to 2,001 square miles in his own district, while the Collector of Dacca controlled 164, the

Collector of Jessore 112 and the Collector of Bākarganj 74 square miles, and that on the other hand the Collector of Faridpur had power over 222 square miles in their districts.

In 1920-21 the number of permanently settled estates on the revenue roll of Faridpur was 5,759 and the demand of revenue from them was 4½ lakhs of rupees. There were also 235 temporarily settled estates with a demand of Rs. 76,000 and 334 estates held directly by Government with demand of Rs. 2,19,000. The land revenue of estates which were permanently settled at the time of the Permanent Settlement averages only six annas an acre and that of estates which were permanently settled at a subsequent date averages nine annas. The area of the latter is only a little over 15,000 acres, and they mostly consist of *char* lands left behind in the beds of rivers moving eastward, which were settled in perpetuity in the course of the nineteenth century. The land revenue of temporarily settled estates varies from Rs. 1—10 to Rs. 2 an acre; the great majority consist of alluvial lands which were resumed in the *diāra* survey of 1877-80, and their land revenue averages Rs. 1—13 an acre.

The district is remarkable for the great number of petty *tālucs* which were recognized as independent estates at the Permanent Settlement. The majority of the revenue-paying estates are consequently very small; 2,156 actually have an area of under 10 acres and 2,513 of under 50 acres.

The statement below shows the ten largest estates and their area within the district; nearly all have also land in neighbouring districts. Some zamīndāris in the north and west are comprised in large compact blocks, but the majority are not; some petty estates merely consist of detached parcels of land in different villages. Altogether 2,450 estates are contained in a single village, 1,078 in two villages, 1,140 in three or more villages and 906 in five to nine villages. On the average, each estate is divided among five villages and each village contains the land of seven estates.

Name.		Acres.
Telibāti Amīrābād	...	72,600
Hāveli	...	60,900
Sātair	...	46,200
Nasibsāhi	...	43,100
Fatehjangpur	...	40,000
Mahimsāhi	...	35,500

Name	Acres.
Nasratsāhi ...	35,100
Kotālipāra ..	34,600
Idilpur	33,200
Sultānpur Khāruria ...	24,500

Government
estates.

The Government estates mostly consist of *chars* or alluvial lands in the rivers or are estates which were purchased by Government at sales for arrears of revenue when no private purchasers were willing to make bids. A few consist of land originally acquired for, but no longer required by, the railway. For instance, there are in the Goālundu subdivision estates which have been formed out of plots of land which have been given up by the railway in consequence of the site of the terminus at Goālundu Ghāt having to be shifted in order to keep it on the river bank; one of these, which according to the settlement figures extends over 1,800 acres, was created out of 19 estates and has land in 55 *manzas*.

On 31st March 1924 there were 241 Government estates under direct management and fourteen which had been let in farm; of the latter all but one (which was a *diāra* of a little over 100 acres) were small plots of land. There were also 21 Government estates in which there was no demand of revenue owing to diluviation of the land. The largest Government estate is Kodālpur in the south-east of the mainland portion of thana Pālang, which contains nearly 11,000 acres of very fertile land, and next to it in size is Char Janajāt (6,500 acres) in the north-east corner of thana Sibchar. There are two Khās Mahāl estates which are fisheries. One, Jalkar Nayānadi Rathkola, is a Government estate which is let in farm; the other, Jalkar Kotālipāra, is a temporarily settled estate which is also let in farm.

Private
estates

Altogether 55 per cent. of the land in private estates has been leased to tenure-holders and 35 per cent. to ryots. The proportion reserved by the proprietors is only 2 per cent. and is mostly marsh or uninhabited *char* land. The land which they themselves occupy consists nearly entirely of homesteads and gardens and not of agricultural land. The owners of the largest estates are non-resident; of the landlords owning petty estates many in the Mādāripur subdivision have their homes in Dacca, but otherwise most live on their estates. The majority of the estates are owned by a large number of co-sharers.

The intermediate tenure is common in Farīdpur, more especially in the north-west; it is less frequent in the south-west. Altogether 221,475 tenures with an aggregate area of nearly 800,000 acres were recorded in the settlement; the average size is small and the rental is low, averaging Re. 1—6 an acre. In the north and west the tenures are chiefly held by middlemen of the landlord class and generally consist of land round their houses or of entire villages; before the Permanent Settlement it was common for the larger landlords to give tenures of whole villages. In the south most of the tenures were originally blocks of waste land granted, at a light rental, to men who undertook to bring them under cultivation. The land was made over to the charge of the grantee for the purpose of reclamation whence the name by which they are known, viz., *hāola* (from the Persian *hawāla* meaning a charge or trust). The tenure-holders are generally resident except in thana Pālang, where many have their homes in the Dacca district. The area kept in the tenure-holders' own possession is mostly uncultivated land or homestead and garden land.

TENURES

The tenures known as *patni tāluks* are frequent in the north of the district. They had their origin in the estate of the Maharaja of Burdwan and were created after the Permanent Settlement to facilitate the collection of rent by the superior landlord and so facilitate his own payment of land revenue. Just as Government made a permanent settlement with the landlords, he made a permanent settlement with his tenure-holders, by creating the *patni tāluk*, which is a permanent tenure held by the lessee and his heirs or transferees at a rent fixed in perpetuity subject to liability to sale for satisfaction of the landlord's demand for rent. These tenures received statutory recognition by Regulation VIII of 1819 (the Patni Sale Law), which defined the relative rights of the zamīndār, and patnīdār, set up a summary process for the sale of the *patni* for non-payment of rent, and legalized sub-letting by the *patnīdār* on similar terms. Since this Regulation was enacted the *patni* tenure has been popular with zamīndārs who wish to give up the direct management of the whole or part of their estates or who desire to raise money by means of a bonus to be paid on the grant of a *patni* tenure.

Patnis.

A tenure of an unusual kind is that called *khanda kharid* which is common in the south of the district, especially in the Kotālipāra estate, and also in small estates in thana Bhānga. It is of modern creation and is based on a contract

Khanda kharid.

which purports to sell the proprietary right in a specified area, generally quite small, subject to the condition that the lessee or purchaser shall pay a portion of the land revenue, and also an annual sum over and above the revenue, to the lessor or vendor. Both these sums are generally nominal. The question at the settlement was whether the possessors of these *khanda kharids* should be recognized as proprietors or tenure-holders in cases where they had not obtained registration by the Collector as proprietors. It was decided to classify all unregistered *khanda kharids* as permanent tenures unless there were special circumstances tending to show that there were part sales of the proprietary right.

RYOTS.

The area held by ryots represents 85 per cent. of the district, excluding the water area. Altogether 588,000 persons were recorded as settled ryots, and the Settlement Officer remarks that probably every ryot in the district might have been so classified without any objection being offered by the landlords, "owing no doubt to the modern custom of taking a heavy fine (*salāmi*) on the creation of the tenancy or the recognition of a purchase, on payment of which the tenant is recognized as having a customary, if not a contractual, right of permanent occupation".

In all, 42,000 persons were recorded as ryots at fixed rates, not as the result of any contract, but because they proved that they had paid rent at a uniform rate for 20 years and so raised the presumption that it had never been changed. The number of occupancy ryots was small—only 6,000—they are mostly purchasers of holdings on the *chars* or Government estates elsewhere. Non-occupancy ryots, who numbered 23,000, mostly cultivate land in the *chars* or *bils*. Many of them were squatters, *i.e.*, cultivators who "squatted" on *char* land and never paid rent to any landlords. The latter did not take the trouble to evict them but waited their time and accepted them as tenants when an arrangement about rents was arrived at.

**UNDER-
RYOTS.**

Sub-letting by ryots who are unable to cultivate all their land is a very common practice. Ten per cent. of the area held by them has been sub-let to under-ryots to the number of 240,000. In the more fertile areas the practice is due not so much to inability as to unwillingness to cultivate, the ryots being too prosperous and indolent to care to till all their lands themselves. The rent paid by the under-ryots is comparatively high averaging Rs. 3—12—3 an acre for the whole district; it rises to nearly Rs. 7 an acre in *Pālang*

thana. In the northern thanas, and especially Pāngsa, no distinction is made in local custom between a ryot and under-ryot as regards status, the holdings of both being regarded as permanent and heritable.

One of the most striking features of the system of land tenures in Farīdpur is the small size of the ryots' holdings. They often consist of one small plot and rarely of more than two or three. This is particularly the case in the north, where a single cultivator usually holds two or more tenancies, sometimes under the same landlord. Taking the district as a whole, the average size of a holding is only 1.39 acres. The average is reduced by the pettiness of the holdings for which rent is paid in kind, for those held at a cash rent average 1.78 acres. The holdings of under-ryots are even more minute, those paying a cash rent being four-fifths of an acre and those paying produce rents half an acre.

HOLD-
INGS.

The average rate of rent paid by different classes of ryots varies only from Rs. 2—6—7 an acre paid by settled ryots to Rs. 3—0—7 paid by non-occupancy ryots. The great mass of the cultivators, *i.e.*, the settled ryots, pay at the average rate of Rs. 2—10—6 an acre. As regards the differences between local areas, rates are highest in the south-east, notably the Pālang thana (Rs. 3—12), and in the Goālundo thana (Rs. 3—6—5), and they are lowest in the *bal* country (Rs. 1—0—6 in Kotālipāra thana and Rs. 1—11—9 in Gopāl-ganj thana) and in Bāliākāndi thana (Rs. 2—4).

RENTS.

The moderation of the rental, which in 1914 represented only 6 per cent. of the value of the gross produce, is noticeable; and it is a remarkable fact that there has been little enhancement since the passing of the Bengal Tenancy Act. In fact, the general level is much the same as it was fifty years ago, though there has been a very great rise in the prices commanded by the crops. The only thana where the landlords have attempted to increase the rents in proportion to the rise of prices is Pālang, where enhancement has been the rule and not the exception as elsewhere. In the opinion of the Settlement Officer, the competition for tenants, the extension of cultivation in the marshes, the uncertainty of title in the *chars* and the gradual deterioration in the fertility of the soil in the north appear to have been the chief operating causes which have prevented enhancement.

Rents in kind were paid at the time of the settlement for 121,000 acres or 9 per cent. of the total area held by ryots. Tenancies of this kind are common in the marshes

Produce
rents.

in the south, but most numerous in the north of the district, especially thanas Pāngsa and Bāliākāndi; they are almost unknown in the *chars*. As it was found in the course of the settlement that the system of produce rents was on the increase, a special inquiry into the causes of the increase was held in the Goālundo subdivision. It was proved conclusively that owing to the rise of the price of rice the cash rent of many ryots had been converted into a produce rent by the order of the landlords backed by a threat of eviction in case of refusal. The landlords who made the change were always small middlemen of the *bhadrālok* class, who wanted supplies of cheap rice; one, for instance, was a doctor who in this way fed a large joint family.

In most cases produce rents are paid under what is known as the *barga* system, the cultivators paying their landlords a proportion of the gross produce, which is usually one-half but sometimes two-fifths or one-third. The landlord sometimes supplies the seed and sometimes allows a deduction from his share on account of the cost of cultivation. The *bargādār*, as the cultivator is called, has always to find the cattle for ploughing. When a fixed amount of the produce, *e.g.*, so many maunds of rice, is paid, the cultivator is called a *dhānkarāridār*; such tenancies are found in thanas Kotālipāra and Gopālgañj.

RELA-
TIONS OF
LAND-
LORDS
AND
TENANTS.

It is rarely that a settlement report gives such a favourable account of the relations of landlord and tenant as does that of Farīdpur. "As far", it says, "as can be ascertained, the relations between the landlords and their tenants in this district have usually been very amicable. Enhancement of rent, which has been so common elsewhere, has taken place very rarely in this district, while arbitrary evictions and arbitrary exactions have never been a feature of agricultural life. Several causes appear to account for this. In the marshes the competition has always been for tenants and not for lands, and this must have made the treatment of tenants very mild. In the alluvial lands on the banks of the great rivers the uncertainty as to their ownership has placed landlords generally at the mercy of their tenants. The few powerful landlords whose title was secure have usually been content with a heavy *salāmi* in preference to a high rent, while the others have been glad to obtain the allegiance of any tenant on any terms.

"In the north of the district, where population must always have been considerable and none of these special

reasons exist for easy relations between landlord and tenant, the same effect appears to have been obtained by the gradual deterioration of the country. It was impossible for landlords to enhance rent and to evict tenants when the fertility of the soil was declining, the population was diminishing and land was gradually going out of cultivation. In these circumstances neither the Rent Law nor the Bengal Tenancy Act made any very great change in the relation between landlords and tenants "

The general conclusion as to present conditions is most favourable. "The ryots in the district generally have all the rights to which the law entitles them. Their rent has rarely been enhanced, and only in very few cases at a greater amount than is allowed by law. Eviction, except through the courts, for failure to pay rent is unknown. The right of the ryots to fruit and other valuable trees is not in practice contested "

The cultivators are also said to have little to complain of in the matter of the illegal cesses called *abwābs* except in the south-east of the district, and more particularly in thanas Pālang and Mādāripur. There marriage fees are levied usually at the rate of Rs. 5 but in some villages at double that rate. Other imposts are (1) *tahuri* at the rate of one anna in the rupee of rent, (2) *dākhila kharach* at three pies to one anna for each rent receipt, (3) *punya* at one rupee per family, (4) a contribution of one rupee in place of forced labour and (5) a fee called *bedi salāmi* on the death of a parent, which comes to two rupees. *At wābs.*

In the north and other parts of the district marriage fees are not levied at all, and in most villages *tahuri* at the rate of half an anna or one anna is the only impost regularly collected. Prohibitive fees are however exacted for the excavation or re-excavation of tanks—a practice most prejudicial to public health in the villages in the north, where there is a scarcity of water for drinking as well as for other purposes.

CHAPTER XI

GENERAL ADMINISTRATION.

SUBDIVISIONS.

For the purposes of general administration other than land revenue the district is divided into four subdivisions, viz., the Sadar (headquarters) or Farīdpur subdivision with headquarters at Farīdpur, the Goālundo subdivision with headquarters at Rājānī, the Mādāripur subdivision with headquarters at Mādāripur and the Gopālganj subdivision with headquarters at Gopālganj. The Gopālganj subdivision is of recent creation, for it dates back only to 1909. In it were incorporated thana Makūdpur, which had previously formed part of the Sadar subdivision, and thanas Gopālganj and Kotālipāra, which were detached from the Mādāripur subdivision, as it had been too large a unit for good administration. Even though its area had been reduced in this way and a full-powered Deputy Magistrate was posted to Mādāripur to assist the Subdivisional Officer, the subdivision continued to be an onerous charge, and the creation of another subdivision was proposed first by a conference of Commissioners of divisions which was held in 1912 and two years later by a special committee appointed by Government, the District Administration Committee. The Committee recommended that the Mādāripur subdivision should be split up into two subdivisions, viz., one on the west comprising police stations Mādāripur, Gopālpur, Rājair and Sibchar with headquarters at Mādāripur, and the other on the east consisting of police stations Janjira, Pālang, Bhadarganj and Gosairhāt. The then Collector suggested that Burirhāt in the centre of the Pālang thana should be the headquarters of the second subdivision. As however Burirhāt could not be approached by boat except during floods and the only connexion with a steamer station was by a footpath five miles long, the Committee could not support this proposal and recommended that the headquarters should be on the

Kirtināsa river at a suitable place between Domesnar and Bhojeswar. These proposals have not been given effect to.

A District and Sessions Judge has his headquarters at Farīdpur, where also an additional Judge has been stationed for some years. The subordinate staff for the administration of civil justice consists of a Sub-Judge and a Munsif at Farīdpur, three Munsifs at Bhānga, three Munsifs at Chikāndi, two Munsifs at Goālundo and three Munsifs at Mādāripur. The jurisdiction of the different Munsifs is as follows. The Farīdpur Munsifi comprises thanas Farīdpur and Boālmāri in the Sadar subdivision; the Bhānga Munsifi thanas Bhānga and Nagarkānda in the Sadar subdivision and thanas Gopālganj and Maksūdpur in the Gopālganj subdivision; the Mādāripur Munsifi thanas Mādāripur and thanas Kotālipāra in the Gopālganj subdivision; the Chikāndi Munsifi thanas Pālang and Sibchar in the Mādāripur subdivision; the Goālundo Munsifi is coextensive with the subdivision of that name.

CRIMINAL
AND CIVIL
JUSTICE.

The criminal courts are those of the District and Sessions Judge, the District Magistrate, the Subdivisional Officers and the Deputy Magistrates, of whom three with first class powers are usually stationed at Farīdpur and one with the same powers at Mādāripur; there are also some Sub-Deputy Collectors with minor powers, whose number varies. In addition to the stipendiary Magistrates, there are benches of honorary Magistrates at Farīdpur, Goālundo, Gopālganj, Mādāripur and Damudya.

Disputes about land, especially alluvial formations in the rivers, are the cause of a large number of civil and criminal cases and not infrequently give rise to riots attended with bloodshed and loss of life. Lawlessness is caused by the uncertainty as to title in the *chars* which spring up in or along the great rivers, the ease with which crops can be raised in them and the advantage which is gained by the man who can first obtain and enforce possession. Special attention was drawn to the subject in the Settlement Reports of Farīdpur and Dacca; and in 1920 the Bengal Alluvial Lands Act was passed with the object of giving opportunities for immediate action so as to prevent violence from gaining an undue advantage when alluvial land forms.

For police purposes the district is divided into 25 police stations (investigating centres), which are shown below under

POLICE.

the different thanas (revenue units) with statistics of area and population :—

Subdivision.	Thana.	Police-station.	Square miles.	Popula- tion.
Sadar ..	{ Faridpur ..	{ Faridpur ..	123	91,516
		{ Char Bhadrāsān	53	32,973
	Nagarkānda .	Nagarkānda	158	118,478
	{ Bhushnā ..	{ Bhushna ..	90	63,253
		{ Madhukhālī .	47	32,165
	{ Bhānga ..	{ Bhānga ..	69	63,253
{ Sadarpur .		47	32,165	
Goālundo .	{ Goālundo ..	{ Goālundo ..	113	74,346
		{ Goālundo Ghāt	50	43,296
	{ Bālākāndī .	Bālākāndī ..	124	87,687
	{ Pāngsa .	Pāngsa .	161	120,890
Gopālganj ..	{ Gopālganj .	Gopālganj .	171	149,304
		{ Maksūdpur .	127	121,573
	{	{ Kastānī .	108	98,000
		Kotālhpāra ..	Kotālhpāra ..	149
Mādāripur .	{ Mādāripur ..	{ Mādāripur ..	103	143,257
		{ Rājāir ..	87	98,266
		{ Kālkunī ..	94	100,842
	{ Pālang ..	{ Pālang ..	64	99,928
		{ Gosairhāt ..	79	71,072
		{ Bhadarganj ..	77	92,874
		{ Lonesingh ..	56	92,874
		{ Sibchar ..	62	88,027
	{ Sibchar ..	{ Janjira ..	67	66,803
		{ Mātbarerchar ..	42	48,402

The sanctioned strength of the police force in 1920 was 796 men, viz., the Superintendent and an additional Superintendent, an Assistant Superintendent, a Deputy Superintendent, 8 Inspectors, 65 Sub-Inspectors, 94 head-constables and 626 constables, representing one policeman for every

four square miles and for every 2,828 inhabitants. The village police force consisted of 4,474 *chaukīdārs* with 472 *dafadārs*.

As usual, there is a district jail at the district headquarters station and a subsidiary jail at each of the subdivisional headquarters. The district jail has accommodation for 353 prisoners who are employed on cloth and carpet weaving, brick-making and pounding, oil pressing and the manufacture of cane, furniture and mats of cocoa-nut fibre. There is accommodation for 38 prisoners at *Mādāripur*, for 26 at *Gopālganj* and for 23 at *Rājbari*. JAILS.

There are registration offices at *Farīdpur*, *Boālmāri*, *Nagarkānda* and *Bhānga* in the *Sadar* subdivision; at *Gopālganj* (*Haridāspur*), *Maksūdpur* (with a joint office at *Kasiāni*) and *Kotālīpāra* in the *Gopālganj* subdivision; at *Madāripur*, where there is also a joint office, *Sibchar* and *Pālang* (with a joint office at *Damudya*) in the *Madāripur* subdivision; and at *Goālundo*, *Bāliākandi* and *Pāngsa* in the *Goālundo* subdivision. REGISTRATION.

There are no special features to notice in the excise administration except that the excise revenue has increased by 70 per cent. in 20 years, rising from Rs. 1,11,000 in 1901-2 to Rs. 1,89,000 in 1920-21. Even so its incidence is approximately only 1½ anna per head of the population. Nearly half is derived from the consumption of *gānja*, 23 per cent. from country spirits, and 22 per cent. from opium. The consumption of intoxicating liquor is comparatively small, partly because of the abstemious habits of the people and partly because nearly two-thirds of the population are *Muhammadans*. EXCISE.

The revenue from stamps is a much more important item in the revenue obtained by Government from the district. It aggregated the large sum of 10½ lakhs of rupees in 1920-21 or 4½ lakhs more than the land revenue. It has been nearly doubled in 20 years and four-fifths of it is obtained from judicial stamps, i.e. consists of the fees charged upon documents used in the law-courts—a fact which is indicative of the fondness of the people for litigation. STAMPS.

It is little short of an anti-climax to quote the figures for income tax. The grand total of the amount realized from this tax in 1920-21 was only Rs. 1,30,000, which was paid by 648 assesses. The paucity of persons assessed to income tax is in itself an unmistakable sign of the industrial and commercial backwardness of the district. INCOME-TAX.

**THE
LEGIS-
LATIVE
COUNCIL.**

The district is represented by four elected members in the Bengal Legislative Council. Two are Muhammadans returned for the two constituencies of North Faridpur and South Faridpur, and two are non-Muhammadans also elected to represent the north and south of the district.

CHAPTER XII.

LOCAL SELF-GOVERNMENT.

There are three municipalities in the district, viz., Farīd-
pur, Mādāripur and Rājbari. MUNICIPALITIES.

Farīdpur, which was first given a municipal constitution Farīdpur.
in 1869, is administered by a Board of 18 Municipal Commissioners, of whom twelve are elected, four are nominated and two are ex-officio members. The area within municipal limits is about four square miles, and the number of rate-payers in 1923-24 was 2,438 or 17 per cent. of the total population. The municipal income is derived mainly from a tax on persons which is levied at the rate of one rupee for every hundred rupees of income; Government and other public buildings are assessed at $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of their annual value. Latrine fees are also realized in return for conservancy work at rates varying with the annual value of holdings. The incidence of all municipal taxation in 1923-24 was Rs. 2—6—7 per head of the population. The total income of the municipality in that year was Rs. 43,000 excluding the opening balance. The municipality employs a second-class sanitary inspector. A waterworks scheme has been proposed but has not yet been taken in hand owing to want of funds.

Mādāripur was first constituted a municipality in 1875, Mādāripur.
and its administration is conducted by a Board of 18 Municipal Commissioners, of whom twelve are elected and six are nominated. For municipal purposes it is divided into nine wards. The rate-payers, according to the returns for 1923-24, number 3,878 or 15 per cent. of the population. The principal source of municipal income is a tax on persons, which is levied at a lower rate than in Farīdpur, viz., at twelve annas per Rs. 100 of the assesses' income. In this municipality also Government and other public buildings are assessed at the rate of $7\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. of their annual value. Latrine fees are collected at the rate of $6\frac{1}{4}$ per cent. of the annual value of holdings. The incidence of taxation in

1923-24 stood at the low figure of Re. 1—2—5 per head of the population. Another productive source of revenue is a municipal market, *e.g.*, Rs. 2,800 was received by the municipality in 1922-23 as premium for its settlement. The municipal income in 1923-24, excluding the opening balance, was Rs. 44,000. The municipality employs two second-class sanitary inspectors and has appointed a whole-time officer as registrar of births and deaths. Schemes for the supply of filtered water and for the surface drainage of the town have been prepared, but have not been carried out.

Rājibāri.

Rājibāri is a municipality of recent date, having been established in 1923. Before that its communal affairs were under the control of a Union Board working under the provisions of the Village Self-Government Act of 1919. A Board of 16 Municipal Commissioners has been constituted, of whom ten are elected, five are nominated and one is an *ex-officio* member. The municipality has not been granted the privilege of electing its Chairman, who is a nominated official. It is divided into five wards, and in 1923-24 there were 2,089 rate-payers or 21 per cent. of the population within municipal limits (9,808). The total municipal income in the same year, excluding the opening balance, was Rs. 8,000 and the incidence of taxation stood at the low figure of 12½ annas per head. The income is derived mainly from a tax on persons at the rate of one rupee per Rs. 100 of income, Government and other public buildings being assessed at the rate of 7½ per cent. on their annual letting value. Latrine fees are levied at the rate of 20 per cent. on the annual letting value of holdings. The municipality has a supply of filtered water from water-works which were installed in 1919, when a quasi-municipal administration was carried on by a Union Committee under the provisions of the Local Self-Government Act. For the upkeep of the water-works a water-rate is assessed at the rate of 7½ per cent. of the annual letting value of holdings by the side of the street provided with hydrants and 6 per cent. in the case of other holdings.

DISTRICT BOARD.

The District Board in 1922-23 consisted of 24 members, of whom twelve were elected, eight were nominated and four were *ex-officio* members. It is laid down in the Local Self-Government Act that when there are Local Boards throughout a district, not less than one-half of the members of the District Board must be elected by them. It is the object of local self-government to train the people in the management of their own local affairs, and of late years Government has aimed at making the District Boards more fully representative

of the people whose affairs they are called upon to administer. In pursuance of this policy it was decided in 1920 that the proportion of elected members should be raised from one-half to two-thirds and that their number should also be increased. In the case of the Farīdpur District Board it was decided that these orders should be given effect to when it was next reconstituted so as to put it on the same footing as other District Boards. The Board was accordingly reconstituted in 1923-24, the number of members being raised to 30, of whom 20 are elected, 7 are nominated and 3 are ex-officio members.

The income of the District Board, excluding the opening balance, amounted in 1923-24 to Rs. 3,86,000, of which Rs. 2,44,000 were obtained from local rates, *i.e.*, the road and public works cess, which is levied at the rate of one anna in the rupee on the annual value of land. Until 1912 half of the income accruing from this cess was credited to Government as public works cess, and the other half was allotted to the District Boards as road cess. In 1913 however Government made over the receipts from the public works cess to the District Boards. Owing to this accession of income, and also partly in consequence of the cess revaluation, the income of the Farīdpur District Board has been more than doubled in the last twenty years. The other most notable event in the recent history of the District Board has been the replacement of the District Magistrate by an elected member as Chairman in pursuance of the Government policy of removing District Boards from official tutelage.

The District Board maintains sixteen dispensaries, besides assisting the same number with grants: one of those maintained by it is a homœopathic dispensary, situated at Madhukhālī; it also maintained three supernumerary doctors in 1923-24. It is responsible for the upkeep of 14 miles of metalled roads and 355 miles of unmetalled roads; these figures are exclusive of the tracks connecting villages, called village roads, which have an aggregate length of 397 miles. The educational expenditure of the Board is directed to maintaining 210 primary schools, to making grants-in-aid to 24 middle schools, 1,719 primary schools, 15 Sanskrit *tois* and one junior *madrassa*, besides giving scholarships or stipends tenable at special institutions such as the Baptist Mission Industrial School at Farīdpur, the deaf and dumb school at the same place and the Farīdpur Weaving Institution. A staff of 7 inspecting pandits is also employed by

the Board. The Board has undertaken to introduce a scheme of free primary schools in two Unions (Gopālganj and Ghāgar) and a similar scheme for a third (Pālang) is contemplated.

In the interests of public health it employs a District Health Officer and takes measures for sanitation and the prevention and mitigation of epidemic disease. In this connexion mention should be made of its efforts to improve the water supply of rural areas by granting loans, free of interest, for the re-excavation of insanitary old tanks and by supplying rings to the villagers for sinking reinforced concrete wells, which have been very successful in the sandy soil of *char* lands. A small permanent staff of vaccinators is employed, which is increased by appointing additional temporary vaccinators during the vaccination season. Three veterinary assistants are also employed under the Board. Among other activities may be mentioned the issue of a monthly magazine on agricultural subjects, called the *Krishikatha*, and the clearing of water hyacinth from certain channels in order to keep them open for navigation.

LOCAL BOARDS.

Local Boards have been constituted for each subdivision, and the number of their members in 1923-24 was: Sadar 17, Goālundo 15, Mādāripur 21 and Gopālganj 15. The number of elected members is 11 in the Sadar Local Board, which has one ex-officio and six nominated members; 9 in the Goālundo Local Board, the remaining six being nominated; 12 in the Mādāripur Local Board, which has one ex-officio and 8 nominated members; and 10 in the Gopālganj Local Board, in which there are one ex-officio and 4 nominated members. All the Boards have the right to elect their own Chairman. The funds at the disposal of these bodies are limited, consisting only of allotments made over to them by the District Board and their duties are very limited in sphere. Reporting on their work in 1923, the Chairman of the District Board remarked: "With the establishment and expansion of Union Boards and a heavy drain upon the District Board under different heads, the allotment to Local Boards is gradually decreasing. It has come to such a pass that Local Boards are now spending more than 36 per cent. of their allotment for administrative purposes. To take concrete figures, the Local Boards of this district spent Rs. 11,461 for administration out of their total allotment of Rs. 32,541 in the year under report. With the increase in the number of members the percentage will be still higher.

The existence of the Local Boards, handicapped as they are for want of funds, is of doubtful utility "

This experience is not singular. In other districts also the same difficulty is felt. In the Government Resolution on the working of the Local Self-Government Act in 1921-22 it was observed: " Where Union Boards have been formed, they are usually entrusted, instead of the Local Boards, with the repair of village roads and with the control of pounds. If Local Boards are to have any vitality, however, they must have responsible functions and the administration of adequate funds. So far the addition of a new link in the chain of local authorities has perhaps tended to impair the utility of the Local Board. It has new duties in supervising the activities of the Union Boards, but a supervisory function, such as this, is barely sufficient justification for its existence ". It is of interest in this connexion to recall the prediction made by Sir Charles Elliott, Lieutenant-Governor of Bengal, within ten years of the passing of the Local Self-Government Act. He foresaw two alternatives. Either the extension of Union Committees and the promotion of village sanitation might stimulate the energies of Local Boards, which would find work in supervising and guiding their action, or the Union Committees, being more closely in touch with local interests, might absorb the functions of the Local Boards and render them superfluous.

At that time the Union Committees had little authority under the Local Self-Government Act and had no power to raise funds to finance their work. It was not till 1908 that the Act was amended so as to enable them to impose taxation within the union and to vest them with powers in regard to village sanitation, drainage and water-supply. Some advance was then made, but the position has since been altered by the enactment in 1919 of the Village Self-Government Act authorizing the creation of the Union Boards described below. The latter bodies have now replaced the Union Committees, of which only one was left in 1923-24, viz., the Bhānga Union Committee. It has been proposed to convert this sole survivor into a Union Board.

UNION
COMMIT-
TEES.

The Village Self-Government Act of 1919 provides for the constitution of village authorities called Union Boards which combine the functions of Union Committees with those of Chaukdāri Pānchāyats under the Chaukidari Act. They have however far larger responsibilities and powers than

UNION
BOARDS.

the Union Committees, being authorized to impose taxation within the union for the discharge of their functions, while the latter extend to the management of the communal affairs of the union, *e.g.*, water-supply, sanitation, village roads, primary schools and the village police (*chaukidārs*). Government may further appoint members of the Union Boards to be benches or courts for the trial of minor criminal and civil cases arising in the union or group of villages.

The number of Union Boards in existence in 1923-24 was 53, *viz.*, five in the Sadar subdivision, twenty in Goālundo, eighteen in Mādāripur and ten in Gopālganj. The area included in the limits of their jurisdiction was 481 square miles and the population aggregated 471,000, of whom 90,000 were actual rate-payers. The income of the Boards totalled Rs. 1,27,000. It consists chiefly of funds raised by the taxation of those resident within the unions, *i.e.*, the union rate, the receipts from which were Rs. 90,000, receipts from pounds and grants from Government and the District Board. Nearly Rs. 70,000 is accounted for by the pay and equipment of *dafadārs* and *chaukidārs*, and the balance is mostly spent on roads, water-supply, sanitation, drainage, dispensaries and schools.

It was reported in 1922-23 that the most progressive Union Boards were Pālang in the Mādāripur subdivision, Gopālganj, the headquarters of the subdivision of the same name, and Rājbari in the Goālundo subdivision, which was subsequently converted into a municipality. All three made use of their powers of taxation under the Village Self-Government Act and utilized the proceeds for the improvement of the areas under their jurisdiction. Other Boards singled out for praise were Bāliākāndi, Banibaha, Habāspur and Jamālpur in the Goālundo subdivision, and Bhojeswar, Gosainhāt, Naria and Tulasar in the Mādāripur subdivision. Of these, the Banibaha Union Board started a dispensary with the aid of a subsidy from Government and the Gosainhāt Union Board opened a thana dispensary with a Government grant. Mention was also made of Barat, Khānkhānāpur, Mulgar, Padamdi, Pāngsa and Ramdiā in the Goālundo subdivision, of Amgrām, Damudya, Gopālpur, Kendua and Sibchar in the Mādāripur subdivision and of Ghāgar, Mahārājpur and Ulpur in the Gopālganj subdivision as having made a creditable beginning. Next year the Union Boards which had the best record were Daulatdiā in the Goālundo subdivision, Bhojeswar in the Mādāripur subdivision and Gopālganj in

the Gopālganj subdivision. On the other hand some Union Boards were disappointing as they displayed a reluctance to impose taxation for purposes of public utility and were content to realize and disburse the amounts required for the pay and equipment of chaukidars.

CHAPTER XIII.

EDUCATION.

STATISTICS
OF LITER-
ACY.

An indication of the extent to which education is diffused among the population of the district is afforded by the census statistics of literacy. The test of literacy is ability both to read and to write, with the qualification that a person is only recorded as literate if he or she can write a letter to a friend and read the answer to it; all persons who are unable to do this are entered in the census schedules as illiterate. The total number of persons who came up to the prescribed standard of literacy in 1921 was 175,520 or 9 per cent. of the district population. This total is made up of 154,919 males and 20,601 females, the number of literates aged 5 and over representing 15·6 per cent. of the male and 2·2 per cent. of the female population respectively.

The actual number of persons who can read and write is in all probability somewhat less than that returned at the census. The Census Superintendent of Bengal, in reviewing the results of the census of 1921, remarks: "The conclusion is inevitable that the return of literacy in adult ages is not accurate. The man who reached the census standard of literacy when he was at school will not admit that his knowledge has slipped from him and perhaps, not having tried his hand for a very long time, is quite unconscious that this has happened. The enumerator has no time to examine each person he enumerates, and adults would resent any attempt on his part to do so. He can read and write himself and very often he has known those whom he is to enumerate all his life. He remembers that so and so was at school in the same class as himself or his brothers and assumes that he has retained his knowledge as he himself has retained it. The fact that the prescription of a standard of literacy for the first time at the census of 1911 made little difference in the proportion of literates over the age of 20, though it made some at earlier ages, points to the probability that the standard is not strictly applied to adults,

and the conclusion is inevitable that the census statistics gravely exaggerate the number of adults who are literate." Elsewhere the Census Superintendent points out that "there is no doubt that it is among Muhammadan cultivators that there has been the greatest exaggeration of the number of adults who are literate." In this connexion, it should be explained that the majority of the boys who go to school only attend a lower primary school and consequently receive only a rudimentary education. Once they have left school and begun to help in the cultivation of their fathers' fields there is very little inducement or opportunity to keep up their elementary knowledge, for reading and writing are but little required in the ordinary cultivator's life; and there is a natural tendency therefore to lapse from literacy.

Even after allowance is made for a probable exaggeration of the number of persons able to read and write, the returns made at each census in the present century, as shown below, demonstrate clearly that education has made great strides in Farīdpur. Compared with other districts in Bengal, it may be said to be average as regards the extent of literacy. It actually stands midway in the list of districts, thirteen having a higher and thirteen a lower proportion of literates, but the district ratio is slightly below the average for Bengal as a whole. There has also been a substantial increase in the number of persons with a knowledge of English. The proportion of males aged 5 and over who were returned as literate in that language rose from 9 per mille in 1901 to 17 per mille in 1911 and to 31 per mille in 1921:—

Year.	Percentage of literates aged 5 and over.		
	Males.	Females.	
1901	11·3	0·7	
1911	13·1	1·2	
1921	15·6	2·2	

As in other districts, the Muhammadans lag behind the Hindus. Of the former only seven in every hundred males aged 5 and over and four in every thousand females can read and write, but among the Hindus 30 per cent. of the males and 5 per cent. of the females can do so.

The premier educational institution in the district is the Rājendra College at Farīdpur, which was established in 1918 largely through the exertions of Babu Ambika Charan Mazumdār, who was well known as a leader in the political life of Bengal. It was also indebted for its creation to a

RAJENDRA
COLLEGE.

munificent donation of Rs. 50,000 given by Babu Ramesh Chandra Ray Chaudhuri, son of Babu Rajendra Chandra Ray Chaudhuri, a zamindar of Baishrashi in this district, and to the grant by Government of a spacious site of about $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres on a permanent lease at a nominal rental. The college started as a second grade college, i.e., it was affiliated to the University of Calcutta only up to the intermediate standard in arts, but it has since been raised to the status of a first grade colleges in arts.

SCHOOLS. The following statement shows in tabular form the number of schools of different classes and the number of students on their rolls on 31st March 1923, with which are given for comparative purposes the number of schools and scholars in 1901-02. It will be seen that in the course of this century both the number of schools and the aggregate of scholars have been nearly doubled:—

Schools.	Number (1922- 23.)	Pupils (1922-23.)		Number (1901- 02.)	Pupils (1901- 02.)
		Male.	Female.		
High	46	9,310	..	23	5,173
Middle English .. .	78	5,406	238	40	2,657
Middle vernacular ..	8	246	..	37	1,468
Upper primary	73	3,362	112	170	6,249
Lower primary	2,315	47,076	19,876	1,015	23,753
Special	106	2,558	34	67	1,068
Total public schools .	2,626	67,958	20,260	1,352	40,368
Private	38	1,676	119	130	1,442
GRAND TOTAL	2,664	69,634	20,379	1,482	41,810

The figures of 1922-23 may be said to mark a return to normal conditions, for the even progress and diffusion of education had for some years previously been affected by disturbing factors, viz., the cyclone of 1919, which destroyed many school buildings, economic stress and the non-co-operation movement, of which a special feature was a boycott of schools. The combined effect of these is reflected in the figures of previous years; for instance, there were 150 fewer

schools and nearly 8,000 fewer scholars in 1921-22. Altogether, 21 schools (11 high, 6 middle and 4 primary) are known to have been opened by those who took part in the non-co-operation movement, but these institutions were of an inferior character, badly staffed, badly financed and badly managed, and they failed to get popular support; the number on their rolls was only 1,726.

The curtailment of educational facilities was not the only evil result of the non-co-operation movement. It produced a lamentable deterioration of school discipline and *morale*, as may be realized from the review of its effects made in 1922-23 by the Inspector of Schools for the Dacca Division. "A wave of indiscipline resulting in students' strikes and boycott of schools passed through the country as a result of the non-co-operation movement. Many left the schools to join national institutions or became volunteers. High schools were the most affected, middle schools were partially so, but primary schools were, as a rule, free from such objectionable activities. School discipline was completely at an end in most schools during the greater part of the last year (1921-22). Although strikes are now over, the spirit of defiance still lingers among school boys. A sullen and listless mood, an open contempt for the present system of education, a want of respect for teachers are the prevailing characteristics of the boys who are at school now."

Of all the many points of difference between Bengal, and other provinces in the north of India none is perhaps more remarkable than the wide diffusion and popularity of secondary schools giving an education in English, more especially in Eastern Bengal. "In no respect," remarked the Bengal District Administration Committee in 1914, "do conditions in Bengal differ more widely from those obtaining elsewhere in India than in respect of Anglo-Vernacular schools", i.e., High and Middle English schools. "While in other provinces these institutions exist almost entirely in towns or at the headquarters of districts, here they almost abound in villages; while elsewhere they owe their existence mainly to Government or to local funds and occasionally to individual munificence, here they have been and are being principally established by private effort; while elsewhere they are on the whole effectively controlled by Government, in Bengal Government, in consequence of the recommendations of the Indian Education Commission of 1882, adopted an attitude of non-interference in regard to private enterprise." In illustration of these remarks the Committee

Secondary
schools.

referred to the Mādāripur subdivision in this district, in which there were then 15 private high English schools and 19 private middle English schools, and contrasted it with the United Provinces, in the whole of which there were only 14 high and 15 middle English schools away from district headquarters, and five of the former and four of the latter were maintained by Government or local bodies.

The popularity of these schools is due to the fact that education in English has long been regarded as the avenue to Government service as well as to professional and industrial employment. Another factor is that direct admissions to them are preferred to joining primary or middle vernacular schools and obtaining admission thence to high or middle English schools. Primary education is imparted in the lower classes of the latter institutions: a middle school is a primary school in its lower and a secondary school in its upper portion, while a high school is a combination of all three—primary at the bottom, middle in the middle and high at the top, and it is easier for a boy to join the lower classes and make his way up the school than to get into the upper classes from a primary or a middle vernacular school. Doubts as to the practical utility of a literary education, such as is given in the secondary schools, suspicions of its real value in training and fitting boys for satisfactory careers, have begun to invade the minds of parents, but this up to the present has not affected the number of high schools or the attendance at them. As will be seen from the previous statement, the number of these schools, which rose from 8 to 23 between 1892-93 and 1901-02, has since been doubled, while the number of pupils has shown an almost proportionate increase.

High
schools.

The following statement gives the names of the different high schools and the number of pupils on the rolls of each on 31st March 1924:—

School.	Number of pupils.	School.	Number of pupils.
<i>Managed by Government—</i>		<i>Unaided.—</i>	
Farīdpur Zila ..	317	Amgrām ..	129
<i>Aided—</i>		Baishreshi Sivasundari	163
Bāzītpur R. K. Edward	97	Bāliākāndi ..	272
Bhadrāsān	98	Bijhari	244

School.	Number of pupils.	School.	Number of pupils.
<i>Aided (contd.)—</i>		<i>Unaided (contd.)—</i>	
Bhānga	396	Birmohan	90
Chhāyagāon	171	Boālmāri George Academy	219
Chikāndi	83	Domesnar	165
Farīdpur Ishān	361	Fukra	199
Gopālganj M. N.	238	Goālundō	445
Gopināthpur	158	Gopālganj S. N. Academy	197
Idilpur	132	Habāspur	151
Khālia	132	Kāneswar	188
Krokdi	215	Kārtikpur	213
Lonesingh	224	Kasān	172
Mādāripur	345	Khānkhānapur	272
Mādāripur Islāmia	345	Kotālipāra Umon	370
Mustafapur	114	Mānkdaha	103
Orākāndi	198	Mithapur	146
Panditshar	175	Nagarkānda	197
Pāngsa G. A.	235	Naria	144
Rājibāri R. S. K. Institution	304	Pālang	281
Rudrakar Nilman	132	Rupāpāth	112
		Sibchar N. K.	204
		Tulasar Gurudās	242
		Ulpur	179

Of the middle schools one at Mādāripur is managed by the local municipality and another is a girls' school at Farīdpur which is managed by Government; of the remainder 45 are aided and 31 are unaided. There are only 8 middle vernacular schools, all in receipt of grants-in-aid. The paucity of these schools, the decline in their number (from 37 in 1901-02) and the comparatively small attendance attest the unpopularity of a secondary education unattended by instruction in English.

Middle schools.

The tabular statement already given will have shown that the great majority of the primary schools are of the lower primary class, in which the rudiments of knowledge

Primary schools.

are taught to young children. The pāṇchāyati union scheme, of which the object is to provide each union with a primary school of a good standard has been put into effect in 191 out of 310 unions.

**Special
schools.**

This heading includes a variety of schools, viz., two schools for the training of primary school teachers or *gurus*, two industrial schools and 102 other schools, including Sanskrit *toles*.

**Industrial
schools.**

The chief institution for technical education, and indeed the only industrial school in the proper sense of those words, is the industrial school of the Australian Baptist Mission at Farīdpur, which in 1922-23 had 78 pupils, mostly Nama-sudra converts to Christianity. It is a well-managed and well-organized institution, which was started in its present form about seven years ago. It is divided into four sections, viz., a primary school, a training school, a piece-work department and a business department. Boys receive a vocational training in the primary school, which was awarded a silver medal at the Calcutta Exhibition of 1924 for the toys they made. In the training school a general training is given in various processes connected with carpentry, polishing, turning, joinery, cane-work, toy-making, boat building, iron work, tinsmith's work, tool-making, elementary surveying, etc. Practical work in the workshop is supplemented by teaching in the class-room. The course lasts about two years, after which the boys pass on to piece-work, for which they are paid regular wages. The annual output of the workshops is valued at Rs. 27,000. The school was awarded a gold medal for furniture at the Calcutta Exhibition of 1924 and received an order from Government for models of the river craft of Bengal to be sent to the Wembley Exhibition.

The other institution classed as an industrial school is a Widow's Home at Orakandi, which was started by Miss Tuck, a missionary lady. She is assisted by another lady who is in charge of the industrial section; this includes a training class for pupils who desire to become sewing mistresses and has also an elementary school attached to it. At this home widows, of whom there were 31 in 1922-23, are taught plain and ornamental needle-work, knitting, embroidery and lace making.

**EDUCA-
TION OF
MUHAM-
MADANS.**

The number of Muhammadans under instruction, which was 12,000 in 1892-93, was for some time almost stationary; the increase by 1901-02 was under a thousand. Progress however was rapid in the next decade, largely owing to the

stimulus which the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam gave to Muhammadan education in this as in other districts of Eastern Bengal. The number had been doubled by 1911-12, and it has since steadily risen, though there was a set-back after 1919-20 in consequence of adverse economic conditions and to a minor extent the non-co-operation and Khilāfat movements. The aggregate in 1922-23 was 46,256 (34,840 boys and 11,416 girls) representing 50 per cent. of the total of pupils under instruction.

This number is not commensurate with the proportion which the Muhammadan community bears to the total population of the district, viz., 63 per cent. They are well represented in the primary schools, where they account for more than half the pupils, but the ratio falls in schools of a higher class. Only one in every six boys in the high schools is a Muhammadan and one in every five boys in the middle English schools. There has been a noticeable falling off in the number of Muhammadan students in high schools in the Dacca Division, which is attributed to economic depression, to the fact that Muhammadans do not obtain preferential treatment in regard to appointments in Government service, as they did under the Government of Eastern Bengal and Assam, and to a growing want of faith in the present system of high school education. According to the Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division, "Muhammadan parents see that higher education does not enable their boys nowadays to earn their bread, as many Muhammadan matriculates, I.A.'s and even B.A.'s are sitting idle at home in a helpless condition. In fact, boys who have no high education are more useful to their poor parents than those who have eaten the fruit of learning".

In addition to the ordinary schools Muhammadans attend Muhammadan institutions in which the course has a religious tone, viz., (1) Korān schools, in which the recitation of the Korān is the chief part of the curriculum, (2) *maktabs*, in which the primary course is combined with the ritual of Islām and instruction in its classical languages, and (3) *madrasas*. There are two middle *madrasas* in the district, which correspond to middle English schools with the addition of instruction in Urdu and Arabic, and six junior *madrasas*, the curriculum of which is designed to combine secular with religious teaching so as to enable the pupils to compete on more equal terms with the students of the ordinary schools and colleges in their after life.

INSPEC-
TING
STAFF.

The district forms part of the charge of the Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division, who has his headquarters at Dacca. A second Inspector has been appointed for this district and the district of Bākarganj, who is immediately responsible to the Inspector for the inspection of high and normal schools and the control of subordinates officers. The District Inspector of Schools is the chief local officer; he is assisted by two subdivisional Inspectors with headquarters at Goālundo and Mādāripur. As there are only two subdivisional Inspectors for four subdivisions, the District Inspector has to have part of the district under his direct inspection. There are 11 Sub-Inspectors in charge of circles, viz., West Sadar, East Sadar, Maksūdpur, Sibchar, Goālundo, Kasiāni, West Mādāripur, East Mādāripur, Pālang, Bhadarganj and Gopālganj. The average number of primary schools for the inspection of which each Sub-Inspector is responsible is 252, which is *prima facie* more than a single officer can inspect thoroughly and regularly, especially in areas where communications are defective. There were also in 1922-23 one Assistant Sub-Inspector in Government service and seven inspecting pandits in the employ of the District Board.

CHAPTER XIV.

GAZETTEER

Faridpur.—Headquarters of the district, situated on the bank of an old channel of the Padma which is called the Mara Padma or dead Padma. It is also the terminus of a branch line of the Eastern Bengal Railway, which connects it with the main line by means of a junction at Pāchuria. An old account of Faridpur, contained in Thornton's *Gazetteer of India*, which is apparently based on information collected in 1854, dismisses the place with the words: "According to Heber, 'the huts of the natives are in no compact village but scattered thinly up and down a large and fertile extent of orchard, garden and paddy (rice) ground.' There seems little more to be said of Furreedpore, and that little not of the most creditable character, it having been a noted resort of river pirates, who made the navigation of this part of the river very hazardous; but the evil has in a great measure ceased since the place has become the locality of the principal Government establishments of the district." This took place early in the nineteenth century. Government issued orders in 1807 transferring from Dacca to Faridpur the headquarters of the large district of Dacca-Jalālpur, in which a great part of the present district was then included, and the court buildings are said to have been erected in 1811.

The area within municipal limits extends over four square miles and includes not only what may be called the bazar portion of the town but also land which is rural in character. It is bounded on the north by the Mara Padma, on the east by a channel called the Madartala Khāl and on the west by another called the Faridpur Jola. On the south lies a large *bil* or marsh, the Dhol Samudra, which expands into a lake in the height of the rainy season, when the water comes up to the neighbourhood of the town. In 1915 the river Padma approached so close to the town that it was said to have bounded it on the north and east; the main stream

was actually two miles away. At one time it seemed quite possible that the river might wash away the railway station or in the alternative that Faridpur might supplant Goālundō as the place for transhipment between the river steamers and the railway.

The population of Faridpur was practically stationary between 1872 and 1891, but has since increased steadily, rising from 10,774 in 1891 to 11,649 in 1901 to 13,131 in 1911 and to 14,503 in 1921. At the last census the Hindus numbered 8,667 or 60 per cent. of the inhabitants, Muhammadans 5,691 and Christians 130. The town has a partial supply of filtered water, which is obtained from two slow sand filters on the banks of the Jubilee and police tanks; the areas not connected with them obtain their supply from tanks, private and municipal. The filters are reported to be not altogether satisfactory, for the filtration is not carried out at a constant rate and the purification of the water is not as thorough as could be desired. A scheme has accordingly been prepared for up-to-date waterworks, which would supply 15,000 persons with 100,000 gallons a day. After careful consideration the Faridpur Jola has been selected as the best source of supply. The water would be pumped up into a reservoir on the bank, from which it would gravitate through pipes to the Jubilee tank. After settlement in that tank it would be pumped through a mechanical pressure filter with a capacity of 10,000 gallons an hour to an elevated reservoir having a capacity of 30,000 gallons and gravitate thence to the town through the distribution system. The funds at the disposal of the municipality are not as yet sufficient to enable it to undertake this scheme; and the same remark applies to a scheme for the surface drainage of the town.

The town contains the usual courts and offices of a district headquarters, a district jail and a hospital with 27 beds. The chief educational institutions are the Rājendra College, the Faridpur Zilla School, the Faridpur Ishān High School and the industrial school of the Australian Baptist Mission, which has its local headquarters here. Mention should also be made of a deaf and dumb school which has recently been established. The chief features of the municipal administration have been mentioned in Chapter XII. Two weekly newspapers, the *Sanjāy* or *Indian Reporter* and the *Faridpur Hitaishini*, are published in the town, as well as three monthly magazines, the *Krishikatha*, the *Barta* and the

Arya Kayastha Prativa. A brief account of the local associations or societies, viz., the Farīdpur District Association, the Farīdpur District Muhammadan Association, the Farīdpur Surhid Sabha and the Shahitya Parishād, will be found in Chapter III. An agricultural exhibition, which was first started in 1864, is held annually in January or February. The annual rainfall is 72 inches, of which 57 inches fall in the four months June to September.

Farīdpur or Sadar Subdivision.—Headquarters subdivision of the district, lying between the Goālundo subdivision on the north and the Mādāripur and Gopālganj subdivisions on the south; the eastern boundary is formed by the river Padma and the western boundary by the Garai and Bārāsia. The land is comparatively high on the east but marshy in interior, especially in thana Nagarkānda, which contain extensive stretches of marsh land.

The subdivision has an area of 637 square miles and a population of 521,901 persons, among whom Muhammadans predominate, accounting for two-thirds of the number. There are 848 villages, according to the census figures, and one town, Farīdpur, the headquarters. For administrative purposes the subdivision is divided into seven police stations, viz., Farīdpur, Char Bhadrāsan, Nagarkānda, Bhushna, Madhukhālī, Bhānga and Sadarpur. The average density of population is 819 per square mile; it rises to the high figure of 1,357 in Bhānga police station and to 926 in Sadarpur to the south, and the minimum is reached in the riverain police station of Char Bhadrāsan, where however it is above 600 to the square mile.

Goālundo.—Village in the north of the Goālundo subdivision, situated near the junction of the main streams of the Padma, as the Ganges is here called, and the Brahmaputra. It is the place where connexion is established between the steamer services plying along the two rivers and the line of the Eastern Bengal Railway running to Calcutta; the actual terminus on the bank of the Padma, at which goods are transhipped and passengers leave the train for the steamer or *vice versa*, is known as Goālundo Ghāt. The site is not permanent. It shifts according as the Padma advances and erodes its bank or recedes and leaves behind it an accretion of sand and silt. The river steamers must have a place at which they can put in and a clear passage for navigation, and the railway has to follow their wanderings, the terminus being shifted as their mooring places shift. The history of the place is consequently one of flux.

The original terminus of the Eastern Bengal Railway was at Kushtia in the Nadia district, and it was moved to Goālundo, which then stood exactly at the junction of the Ganges and Brahmaputra, owing to the channel of the former silting up at Kushtia (1860-70). The sequel is thus told in Sir William Hunter's *Gazetteer of India*. "Up to 1875 the Goālundo station stood upon a massive embankment near the water's edge protected by masonry spurs running out to the river. About Rs. 13,00,000 had been spent upon these protective works, and it was hoped that engineering skill had conquered the violence of the Gangetic floods. But in August 1875 the solid masonry spurs, the railway station and the magistrate's court were all swept away; and deep water covered their sites. A new Goālundo terminus had to be erected two miles inland from the former river-bank." Many have been the subsequent changes; in the thirty years ending in 1914 Goālundo was located in ten different places, the sites being sometimes seven or even fifteen miles apart.

The importance of the place lies in the fact that it is the junction for the railway and steamer traffic on both the Ganges and Brahmaputra. On the former river steamer services connect it with Eastern Bengal on the one hand and with Bihar and the United Provinces on the other. On the latter steamers proceed to and from Assam. Both rivers bring goods and passengers to Goālundo for transshipment to the railway to Calcutta, and similarly they come by rail from Calcutta for transport along the rivers. Goālundo has a large bazar with Bengali and Mārwarī merchants and contains a dispensary with 54 beds, a high school and the quarters of officers of the railway and steamer companies. It is also a depôt for labourers going to or returning from the tea gardens of Assam; an officer is stationed there who acts as Assistant Superintendent of Emigration, Embarkation Agent and Medical Inspector of Emigrants. The headquarters of the subdivision were formerly at Goālundo, but owing to the changes of site consequent on the oscillations of the Padma they were moved inland to Rājbarī.

Goalundo subdivision.—Northern subdivision of the district with an area of 448 square miles. The population in 1911 was 326,219, Muhammadans predominate largely except in thana Bāliākāndi, where Hindus are very nearly as numerous, and in the subdivision as a whole there are two Muhammadans to every Hindu. The number of villages returned at this census was 879; there is also one town, Rājbarī,

the headquarters. For administrative purposes the subdivision is divided into four police stations, viz., Goālundo, Goālundo Ghāt, Bāliākāndi and Pāngsa.

The subdivision, which is bounded on the north and east by the river Padma and on the south-west by the river Garai, is an alluvial plain with many low depressions between the rivers and streams which pass through it. The surface is, however, high compared with that of the other subdivisions, as the rivers have suspended their work of raising the land by the deposition of silt. They have now largely silted up and the fertility of the soil, deprived of the top-dressing of silt spread by the flood water, has consequently decreased. Malarial fever is prevalent, and the density of population, which is 728 persons to the square mile, is less than in the other subdivisions. The subdivision is served by the Eastern Bengal Railway and by boats and steamers on the Padma, but communications are defective in the interior, for the rivers have silted up to such an extent that they are no longer navigable except in the rains and roads are few in number. Altogether, this is the least progressive part of the district.

Gopalganj.—Headquarters of the Gopālpanj subdivision situated on the river Madhumati. It was treated as a town for the first time at the census of 1921, when the population was returned at 3,478 persons. The place has been a subdivisional headquarters only since 1909, when the Gopālpanj subdivision was constituted, but it has long been a centre of local trade, more especially in rice and jute. Owing to its situation on the river Madhumati and also on the Mādāripur Bil route it occupies a favourable position for traffic and transport, and it is a place of call for river steamers. It contains the usual public offices of a subdivisional headquarters, a dispensary with 12 beds and two high schools, and it is a mission station of the Evangelistic Mission.

Gopalganj subdivision.—South-western subdivision of the district, bounded on the west by the river Madhumati, which separates it from the districts of Jessore and Khulna, and on the east by the Mādāripur subdivision. It has an area of 555 square miles and a population, according to the census of 1921, of 476,039 persons. Hindus predominate, numbering 265,977 or 60,000 more than the Muhammadans; this is the only subdivision in which Hindus outnumber Muhammadans. The strength of the Hindus is due to the large population of Namasudras in the subdivision. It contains

close on 200,000 Namasudras or half the total number found in the district. It has been mentioned in a previous chapter that the Namasudras are denizens of the swamps, and the most noticeable physical feature of the subdivision is its marshy character; thanas Maksūdpur and Kotālipāra, in particular, are little more than vast stretches of marsh; studded with homesteads built on artificially raised sites. Considering the nature of the country the density of population is surprisingly high, averaging 858 persons to the square mile and falling below that figure in only one thana, viz., Kotālipāra, where the land supports 719 persons per square mile. The number of villages, according to the census figures, is 584, and there is one town, Gopālganj, the headquarters. For administrative purposes the subdivision is divided into four police stations, Gopālganj, Maksūdpur, Kasiāni and Kotālipāra.

Kotalipara.—Village in the south-east of the Gopālganj subdivision situated on the river Ghāgar, which rises in the marshes to the north and flows south to join the Madhumati; it is called the Sildaha in the lower part of its course. The village is the headquarters of a police station and contains an outdoor dispensary, high school, registration office, and post and telegraph office. The chief interest of the place lies in the existence of a great fort still in a good state of preservation: the walls, which are made of earth, are fifteen to thirty feet high and measure two to two and a half miles each; the accounts of the size of the fort vary, for one says that it measures $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles by $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, while another states that each of the walls is about 2 miles long. At any rate, it is the largest fort in Eastern Bengal, the only one comparable to it being the fort called Garh Jaripa, a few miles north of Shearpur in the district of Mymensingh, which measures two miles by one or one and a half mile. It has been surmised that the name Kotālipāra means the hamlet (*pāra*) on the ramparts (*ālī*) of the fort (*kot*).

The age and history of the fort are still a matter of conjecture, but the discovery of ancient copper-plate grants and coins in its vicinity point to the existence of a settlement here as early at least as the fifth century A.D. The finds include the Ghāgrāhāti copper plate mentioned in Chapter II, which was discovered about 1908 by a cultivator in the village of that name a short distance from the southwest of the fort, gold coins of the Gupta emperors found in a field called locally Sonākānduri in the village of Guakhola,

which lies about three-quarters of a mile west of the south-west corner of the fort, a gold coin of an unknown king found at Ghāgar about a mile east of Kotālipāra and a copper plate grant of Viśwarupa, one of the Sena dynasty, which was found in Madanapāra near Pinjuri close to the south-west corner of the fort.

From a study of the copper plate grant of Ghāgrāhāti, which is in the Dacca Museum, Babu Nalini Kanta Bhattasali, Curator of the Museum, has succeeded in giving the following reading of the boundaries of the land of which it records the grant during the reign of Sāmāchāra Deva at the close of the sixth century A.D.:—On the east the goblin-haunted *parkkatī* tree; on the south the Vidyādhara *Jotika*; on the west the corner of Chandra Varman's fort; on the north the boundary of the village Gopendra Choraka. The site he has identified after personal inspection with a locality close to the north-eastern corner of the fort, which he describes as follows:—

“ The corner is locally known as Bujruger Kona, or the learned man's or magician's corner, from a certain Bujrug who had made the place his residence. The ramparts at this place are about 15 feet high from the surrounding fields and appear still higher from the canal outside. The breadth of the rampart is here as great as 150 yards. About half a mile to the north-west from the corner there is a forsaken homestead, with a tank and big trees on its banks, which is called Jatiabādi or Jatia's house, and it is traditionally remembered to have been the residence of one Vidyādhara and his wife Jatia Budi, i.e., the old woman with matted locks. The place is notorious among all the villages round as a haunt of ghosts. By the north bank of the tank at Jatiabādi there runs east-west two curious parallel embanked roads at a distance of some yards from each other. I asked the villagers the necessity of having two roads close to each other, and they told me that one was meant for the king and his officers and the other for the common people. This double road, whatever may have been its purpose, appears to have been denoted by the term *Jotika* or two roads placed together. The village of Govindapur begins a little north of this place, and this was no doubt the Gopendra Chorka of the plate, the words Govinda and Gopendra being synonymous ”.

Babu Nalini Kanta Bhattasali goes on to say: “ The last point in connexion with the plate of Sāmāchāra Deva

is the mention of the fort as that of Chandra Varman. Who is this Chandra Varman, who was still remembered in his handiwork, the fort at Kotalipara, even in the time of Sāmāchāra Deva? This fort, which measures $2\frac{1}{2} \times 2\frac{1}{2}$ miles, is the biggest earthwork known in Bengal, the next in size being that at Mahāsthān, which is only 1,000 yards \times 1,500 yards. Who was this Chandra Varman who was so powerful as to construct so large a fort in this low-lying tract from the vicinity of which coins of Gupta emperors are constantly discovered? We are at once reminded of the Chandra of the Meherauli pillar inscription, who 'when warring in the ~~Vanga countries kneaded~~ and turned back with his breast the enemies who uniting together came against him and thus wrote fame on his arms by his sword' (Fleet, p. 141). Fleet emphasized the early character of the palaeography of this inscription, which is not dated, and Allan, with his usual insight, has rejected the identification of this Chandra with Chandra Gupta II. Finally, M. M. Haraprasād Sāstri has identified this Chandra with Chandra Varman, son of Sinha Varman of Pushkarana, of the Susunia Hill inscription—Chandra Varman who was finally overthrown by Samudra Gupta about the third decade of the fourth century A.D.

"When we see that a most impressive monument in the shape of a great fort, to which Chandra Varman's name is applied even in the sixth century, is found at Kotālipāra near the heart of old Vanga, we are finally convinced that these scholars are right in identifying the Chandra of the Meherauli pillar inscription, who came and warred in Vanga, as Chandra Varman, of whose advent in Bengal we have now tangible proof in the shape of the great fort known after him. Chandra Varman's campaigns in Bengal and the foundation of the fortified settlement at Kotālipāra may be approximately dated about 315 A.D."

It may well be asked how a great fort of this size came to be built in such a remote and marshy place as Kotālipāra now is. Babu N. K. Bhattasali has seen the difficulty and has an explanation. "Kotālipāra", he says, "is at present surrounded on all sides by big marshes extending over scores of miles, and it is inconceivable that any sane man could think of a royal settlement in such a water-logged area. But the big fort is there, and brick constructions very often come up unexpectedly from low water-logged places. The truth has been guessed by Mr. Pargiter and others—that the low level of Kotālipāra is the effect of subsidence due to earthquake. It is not difficult to guess when this subsidence

took place when we find a new town springing up during the reign of Dharmaditya which does not seem to have existed in the third year of the same reign". The writer here alludes to the provincial capital or divisional headquarters, Navya-kasika which is mentioned in the Ghāgrāhati copper plate but not in the two other Farīdpur copper plates inscribed in the reign of Dharmaditya which have been noticed in Chapter II.

He proceeds to give a date which is *prima facie* conjectural, "The presumption", he says, "is that about the fifth or sixth year of the reign of Dharmaditya owing to an earthquake marshes began to form round Kotālipāra, which had been a flourishing royal settlement for the past two centuries and a half, and necessity was felt for shifting the gubernatorial headquarters to some new and safer site on more settled land. . . . Kotālipāra continued as a district headquarters but the value of its land decreased, so much so that we find almost a whole village, which is described as having long lain fallow in Sāmāchāra Deva's plate, given away to a Brahman for no consideration".*

Madaripur.—Headquarters of the Mādāripur subdivision situated at the junction of the Ariāl Khān and Kumār rivers. The town stretches along the southern bank of the former river, which is apt to cause erosion, and along the eastern bank of the latter river. The population rose by less than one thousand between 1872 and 1891, when it was 13,772, but has since increased steadily, rising to 17,463 in 1901, to 19,073 in 1911 and to 25,297 in 1921. The increase in the last decade represented nearly 33 per cent. and is attributed largely to the advantages derived from the Mādāripur Bil route, a canalized series of waterways by which steamers and boats can pass to Khulna and thence to Calcutta. Approximately two-thirds of the inhabitants are Hindus and one-third Muhammadans.

The town is a centre of the trade in jute and contains a much frequented market and bazar. It is also a centre of steamer traffic, by which communication can be had with Nārāyanganj and Chāndpur on the one hand and with Khulna on the other; access to the place last named is had either by a circuitous route through Barisāl and the Sundarbans or by the more direct passage afforded by the Mādāripur Bil route. The town contains the usual public offices found at a subdivisional headquarters, a dispensary with 8 beds

* N. K. Bhattasali, *The Ghugrahati Copper-plate Inscription of Samachara Deva and connected questions of later Gupta chronology*, *Dacca Review*, May-June, 1920 and July-August, 1920.

and two aided high schools, viz., the Mādāripur high school and the Mādāripur Islāmīa; the Baptist Mission has a station here. The chief trade is in jute, which is brought from the jute-growing area and transported to Calcutta; and the chief industry is jute pressing, i.e., the fibre is pressed into jute for export to the mills.

In the west of the town there is a large bazar called Charmaguria, which has a system of surface drainage by means of pucca drains. In the centre of the town the houses are scattered about irregularly with narrow connecting lanes and many small tanks and ditches; the whole town is, in fact intersected by *khāls* or water-channels. A scheme has been drawn up, but not yet carried out, for the drainage of this part of Mādāripur. It is proposed to draw the silt-laden water off through the tanks and ditches, which would consequently be filled up in course of time through the deposition of silt, while efficient drainage would be obtained by the water being drained off when the river is not in high flood. In this connexion also it may be stated that a waterworks scheme has been drawn up for the supply of filtered water to the town. The daily supply would be 55,000 gallons for 11,000 persons. The river Ariāl Khān has been selected as the best source of supply, provision being made against damage to the works by erosion. It was found from sinking trial wells that there was no prospect of obtaining a good supply from wells. The main features of the scheme are that the water would be pumped from the river by means of engines, which would be portable so as to allow of their being moved back in case of erosion of the river bank. A suction pipe would be carried into the river on a jetty and a delivery pipe would discharge into the Victoria reserved tank, from which another set of engines would pump it to a reservoir on the top of a water tower. After passing through filters at the base of the tower, the purified water would be conducted to a service reservoir and be delivered through the distribution system. A sketch of the municipal administration will be found in Chapter XII.

Madaripur subdivision.—South-eastern subdivision of the district, bounded on the north by the Sadar subdivision, on the east by the Meghna, on the south by the district of Bākarganj and on the west by the Gopālganj subdivision. Its area is 731 square miles and the population returned in 1921 was 925,699. Nearly 70 per cent. of the inhabitants are Muhammadans and close on 30 per cent. are Hindus. The density of population is great, the land supporting 1,266

persons per square mile; in no police station does the figure fall below 1,000 to the square mile except in Gosairhāt (900) and Janjira (997). This teeming population is distributed between 1,048 villages and one town, Mādāripur, the headquarters.

Physically, the subdivision is a typical Eastern Bengal area. A low-lying tract, bounded by the estuary of the Meghna, in and along which alluvion and diluvion are constant, and intersected by many rivers and channels, it is subject to the periodic inundation and silt fertilization which are characteristic of this part of the delta. Altogether, it is the most progressive of the three subdivisions. Educationally, it is the most advanced area in Faridpur, high and middle English schools being specially numerous. The land is fertile and yields bounteous crops of rice and jute. Trade, mainly in agricultural produce, is brisk, and communication and transport along the rivers and waterways are easier than in other parts of the district.

Rajbari.—Headquarters of the Goālando subdivision, in the north of which it is situated. It has a station on the Eastern Bengal Railway and is $18\frac{1}{2}$ miles by road from Faridpur. The place is really a group of villages which were treated as a town at the census of 1921, when a population of 7,275 was returned. Two years later a municipality was constituted; details of the municipal administration will be found in Chapter XII. It contains the usual public offices of a subdivisional headquarters, a dispensary with 21 beds, and a high school. Waterworks, which were installed in 1919, serve about 3,000 people and give an average daily supply of 16,000 gallons of water.

Sadar subdivision.—See Faridpur subdivision.

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